

THE BIBLICAL CONCEPTION OF DIVINE FORGIVENESS  
IN APOSTOLIC CHRISTIANITY WITH SPECIAL  
REFERENCE TO THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS  
AND PAULINE THEOLOGY

A Thesis

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To

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## PREFACE

This dissertation seeks out and attempts to elucidate one of the important soteriological themes of the Bible. It has no specific thesis to set forth and substantiate. Rather it is an inquiry or a search for a biblical theme and an exposition of it.

It may be said that in the biblical narrative all of God's dealings with a recalcitrant Israel and a sinful church involve forgiveness. Therefore, it is impossible to completely isolate for study that which is implied everywhere. This is true in one sense. Yet such a general statement is drawn from data which can be isolated and which must be reexamined periodically in the light of the current state of biblical studies. This work seeks to do that. It takes as its key the specific terminology for divine forgiveness; it studies the passages where forgiveness is clearly implied. Along the way it becomes increasingly evident that the apostles considered forgiveness to be a part of their wider message. To find its place in that message and its contribution to it are the aims of this study.

During the years of work on this dissertation, I have been continually conscious of my indebtedness to a number of people for their generous help. The counsel and encouragement

of the late Professor William Manson were invaluable. Professor James S. Stewart was a continual source of advice, stimulation and encouragement. His evaluations of portions of my work were always discerning and helpful. The Rev. R.A.S. Barbour also gave generously of his time and counsel. His advice in regard to the general approach and limits of my research and his constructive criticism were always graciously given. The friendship of these three men and their families were gifts which my family and I cherish and for which we are deeply grateful.

I would also express appreciation to Professors Norman W. Porteous and James Barr. Both have read portions of my work and have given their suggestions and general evaluation.

No dissertation could be attempted without the services of a good library. To the Reverend Dr. J. A. Lamb, the Librarian at New College, and to his assistant, Miss Barrie, I owe a large debt of gratitude. Their cheerful help and patience during my research made the library hours pleasant ones, indeed. Likewise, I am grateful for the help of the Reverend Mr. Frank P. Grisham and his staff in the Religion Section of the Joint University Libraries in Nashville, Tennessee.

I wish to express my gratitude to my mother and father. Their generosity made it financially possible for me to undertake this work and their love over the years has provided a basis for understanding the subject of it.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge deep indebtedness to my wife. Her exhortation, encouragement, and comfort at the appropriate times have made it possible for me to complete this work. What might have been a rather lonely course has been with her an exciting pilgrimage.

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ABBREVIATIONS OF STANDARD  
REFERENCE WORKS AND THEOLOGICAL JOURNALS

<u>BASOR</u>	<u>Bulletin of American Schools of Oriental Research</u>
<u>BDB</u>	<u>A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</u> (ed. F. Brown, S. R. Driver and C. A. Briggs)
<u>BJRL</u>	<u>Bulletin of the John Rylands Library</u>
<u>Ency. Bib.</u>	<u>Encyclopaedia Biblica</u> (ed. T. K. Cheyne and J. S. Black)
<u>ERE</u>	<u>Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics</u> (ed. Jas. Hastings)
<u>ET</u>	<u>The Expository Times</u>
<u>EVV</u>	<u>The English versions of the Bible</u>
<u>Exp. Grk. Test.</u>	<u>The Expositor's Greek Testament</u> (ed. W. R. Nicoll)
<u>Expos.</u>	<u>The Expositor</u>
<u>HDAC</u>	<u>Dictionary of the Apostolic Church</u> (ed. James Hastings)
<u>HDB</u>	<u>Dictionary of the Bible</u> (ed. Jas. Hastings)
<u>HDCG</u>	<u>Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels</u> (ed. Jas. Hastings)
<u>HTR</u>	<u>Harvard Theological Review</u>
<u>IEJ</u>	<u>Israel Exploration Journal</u>
<u>Inter.</u>	<u>Interpretation</u>
<u>Inter. Bible</u>	<u>Interpreter's Bible</u> (ed., Geo. Buttrick)
<u>JBL</u>	<u>Journal of Biblical Literature</u>
<u>Jew. Ency.</u>	<u>The Jewish Encyclopedia</u>
<u>JQR</u>	<u>Jewish Quarterly Review</u>
<u>JR</u>	<u>Journal of Religion</u>
<u>JTS</u>	<u>Journal of Theological Studies</u>
<u>Jud.</u>	<u>Judaica</u>
<u>KThWNT</u>	<u>Theologisches Woerterbuch zum Neuen Testament</u> (ed., Gerhard Kittel)
<u>NTS</u>	<u>New Testament Studies</u>
<u>SJT</u>	<u>Scottish Journal of Theology</u>
<u>Strack-Bill.</u>	<u>Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch</u> (ed., H. L. Strack and P. Billerbeck)
<u>ThWBB</u>	<u>A Theological Word Book of the Bible</u> (ed., Alan Richardson)
<u>VGT</u>	<u>The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament</u> (ed., J. H. Moulton and G. Milligan)
<u>VT</u>	<u>Vetus Testamentum</u>
<u>ZAW</u>	<u>Zeitschrift fuer die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</u>
<u>ZThK</u>	<u>Zeitschrift fuer Theologie und Kirche</u>



The biblical quotations which appear in the body of this work are taken from the following texts: English--The Holy Bible: The Revised Standard Version Containing the Old and New Testaments (New York: Thos. Nelson & Sons, 1952); Hebrew--Biblica Hebraica, ed. Rud. Kittel (3rd ed.; Stuttgart: Privilegiert Wuerttembergische Bibelanstalt, 1937). Greek--Septuaginta; id est Vetus Testamentum Graece iuxta LXX interpretes, ed. Alfred Rahlfs (2 vols.; 5th ed.; Stuttgart: Privilegiert Wuerttembergische Bibelanstalt, 1952); Novum Testamentum Graece, ed. Eberhard Nestle and Erwin Nestle (20th ed.; Stuttgart: Privilegiert Wuerttembergische Bibelanstalt, 1950).

The biblical citations are to the Hebrew and Greek (new) testaments mentioned above.

The spelling throughout the paper conforms to standard American usage as recorded in Webster's New International Dictionary of the English Language (2d ed.; unabridged; Springfield, Mass.: G. C. Merriam Co., 1949).

PART I

FORGIVENESS WITHIN THE OLD COVENANT

## Introduction: Sin in the Old Testament

The Old Testament understanding of man takes its starting point, as Walther Eichrodt writes, from "the unconditional obligation of the will of God."<sup>1</sup> That starting point is more specifically the redemption of the Israelites from Egypt and the conclusion of the covenant at Sinai. This was interpreted as being accomplished by the grace of God, and, as a consequence, Israel was under obligation to God. They were to be his covenant-people and to accept the implications of that for their worship and ethical conduct (see Ex. 20). It is against this background of God's grace and command that sin takes its meaning.<sup>2</sup>

A review of the major terms for sin will serve as an introduction to the meaning of the idea.<sup>3</sup> The English word is used for four different Hebrew roots:  $\chi \psi \eta$ ,  $\eta \eta \psi$ ,  $\psi \psi \eta$ , and  $\eta \lambda \psi$ . G. Quell writes:

These four roots, though closely related in their religious and theological use, differ from one another so fundamentally in their essential quality that a study

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1. Man in the Old Testament, trans. K. and R. Gregor Smith (London: SCM Press, 1951), p. 9.
  2. So A. B. Davidson, The Theology of the Old Testament (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1904), p. 216; H. Wheeler Robinson, The Christian Doctrine of Man (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1911), p. 44; Inspiration and Revelation in the Old Testament (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1946), p. 53; G. Ernest Wright, "The Faith of Israel," Inter. Bible, I, 385.
  3. So Robinson, The Christian Doctrine . . ., p. 43.

of them will enable us to trace the main lines of Hebrew thought on the subject of sin.<sup>1</sup>

The most recurrent terms for sin are the verb חָטָא (238 times), the noun חַטָּאת (289) and their cognates. A. B. Davidson summarizes,

. . . the word חָטָא, like the corresponding Greek word ἁμαρτάνω, means to 'miss,' as the mark by a slinger, the way by a traveller, and even to find 'wanting' in enumerating. There is the idea of the goal not reached, a mark not struck.<sup>2</sup>

Though these terms never completely lost the idea of making a mistake, they came to be applied to all kind of wrong-doing.<sup>3</sup> In the great majority of their occurrences they refer to the sin of man against God.<sup>4</sup> Literally speaking, these terms do not have reference to the motives or intent of the one who offends God. However, as C. Ryder Smith<sup>5</sup> and Ludwig Koehler<sup>6</sup> point out, they are generally used to refer to a deliberate missing of the mark in the face of divine direction.

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1. G. Quell et al, Sin, trans. J. R. Coates ("Bible Key Words From Gerhard Kittel's Theologisches Woerterbuch Zum Neuen Testament; London: Adam and Charles Black, 1951), p. 7.
  2. The Theology . . ., p. 207.
  3. So Quell et al, Sin, p. 8.
  4. The noun also appears frequently for a "sin-offering" (Lev. 4.1-5.13) which is the means of putting away sin or its consequences.
  5. The Bible Doctrine of Sin and of the Ways of God with Sinners (London: The Epworth Press, 1953), p. 17.
  6. Old Testament Theology, trans. A. S. Todd (London: Lutterworth Press, 1957), p. 169.



The second verb,  $\text{נָסָה}$ , is only occasionally used to mean "commit iniquity, do wrong," but its noun,  $\text{נִסָּה}$ , is used in this sense over 200 times. Its usual meanings are listed as "iniquity, guilt or punishment of iniquity."<sup>1</sup> This term calls attention to an important difference between the Hebrew and Western ways of thinking. N. H. Snaith writes:

We [i.e. Westerners] make a clear distinction between sin as the wrong act itself, the guilt which thereafter rests upon the sinner, and the consequences of the sin which fall sometimes on the sinner and usually on the innocent. The Hebrews tended to include all three aspects under the same word.<sup>2</sup>

An excellent illustration of this is found in Gen. 4.13, where Cain says,

My punishment (  $\text{נִסָּה}$  ) is greater than I can bear.  
(Cf. also Is. 53.6)

Sometimes it is difficult to decide which meaning it has in a particular context. When the context shows that it is to be considered an act of sin, it refers, as Otto Baab notes, to "iniquity, committed in spite of divine command."<sup>3</sup>

The most descriptive term for sin is the verb  $\text{נָסָה}$  (41 occurrences) and its noun  $\text{נִסָּה}$  (130). The idea is that of "revolt" or "rebellion"; as such it may be directed against

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1. BDB.

2. "The Language of the Old Testament," Inter. Bible, I, 226.

3. The Theology of the Old Testament (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1949), p. 101.

men (e.g. I Kings 12.19), but its predominant use is for man's rebellion against God. It frequently appears in the prophetic literature.

'You have all rebelled against me, says the Lord'  
Jer. 2.29b.

As G. Quell writes, this root

represents sin under its most active, and therefore least formal aspect . . . In secular non-legal speech it means the wilful breaking of a relationship of loyalty and peace . . . Isaiah and Jeremiah use /it/ . . . to express a rebellion of Isarael against Yahweh and human responsibility for the situation is unmistakable.<sup>1</sup>

The fourth verb  $\text{נָלַץ}$  (19 occurrences), its parallel verb  $\text{לָלַץ}$  (4), and its noun  $\text{נִלְצָה}$  (19) convey the idea of going astray or of sinning unwittingly. The noun is often translated "error." These terms are usually found in the Priestly writings and appear in contrast to sins committed "with a high hand." E. g.

. . . the priest shall make atonement for him for the error which he committed unwittingly.

Lev. 5.18

Though the root  $\text{נָלַץ}$  seems to be a feeble word, G. Quell contends that it

is by no means a mild expression. It is really much more weighty than the terms which indicate a formal missing of the mark or an emotional rebellion, since it implies a right intention on the part of the one who goes astray; his going wrong is to be attributed to

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1. Sin, p. 10.

circumstances, i.e. from the religious point of view to God. An element of demonic horror comes upon the scene the moment error is viewed religiously apart from ritual, and indeed is not entirely absent from the latter, in spite of the possibility of accommodation, so far as the cult is concerned.<sup>1</sup>

From the use of these terms in Is. 28.7 and Job 12.16 Quell concludes that the authors are boldly implying that ultimately sin is inexplicable and lies within the mystery of God.<sup>2</sup>

The Meaning of Sin: It is evident from this brief review of the terms that sin takes its meaning from its theological setting. Though there was in early Israel a remnant of an amoral, dynamistic view of holiness and sin,<sup>3</sup> the prevailing view was that it was a religious concept. It was considered to be a rebelliousness and an unfaithfulness in the face of the gracious, covenanting God. H. H. Rowley writes,

Various terms for sin are used in the Bible, but common to every form of sin is its disharmony with the will of God.<sup>4</sup>

Although sin takes its determinative meaning from the covenant relationship with God, it is also presented as a violation of

1. Ibid., 11f.

2. Ibid., 11f.

3. Wright, Inter. Bible, I, 385. See also Millar Burrows, An Outline of Biblical Theology (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1946), p. 165; Sigmund Mowinckel, Religion und Kultus (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1953), 81ff.

4. The Faith of Israel (London: SCM Press, 1956), p. 87. Mowinckel, Religion . . ., 85, writes, "Die Woerte fuer Suende koennen in den verschiedenen Sprachen verschiedenste etymologische Grundbedeutungen haben, aber gemeinsam fuer den bewussten Inhalt des Begriffes ist dabei die Vorstellung des Gegensatzes zum Wesen und Willen der Gottheit." See the unity of the terms in Ps. 32.5.



other relationships<sup>1</sup>--those with other individuals and those with society.<sup>2</sup>

The meaning of sin includes more than the act of violation. The concept of guilt, the state of being in the wrong with God, i.e. deserving of his punishment, is also included in the Hebrew terms. The idea of punishment is also contained in certain recurrent terms for sin. This suggests that rebelliousness toward God carries its own inherent punishment. Moreover, since people with good intentions can fall into error, there is ultimately in the meaning of sin an irrational mystery. That is, behind such errors there is perhaps a demonic force for which there is no accounting. As the Yahwist recognizes in Gen. 3.1, it simply exists.

The Results of Sin: In the Old Testament sin inevitably brings on two kinds of consequences.<sup>3</sup> These grow immediately out of the meaning of sin. First, there is a serious breach in the relationship which exists between man and God; their innocent and loving communion is broken. (See Is. 59.1f.)

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1. On this point see Rowley, The Faith of Israel, 89ff.
  2. See Gerhard von Rad, Theologie des Alten Testaments (Muenchen: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1957), p. 263.
  3. T. H. Robinson, "Epilogue: the Old Testament and the Modern World," The Old Testament and Modern Study: A Generation of Discovery and Research, ed. H. H. Rowley (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951), 353f.

The Yahwist portrays this idea in the Paradise story. The faithless man and wife recognize their guilt and hide themselves when the Lord walks in the garden (Gen. 3.8). The subsequent banishment from the garden (3.23f.) emphasizes the close connection between man's sin, his guilt, and God's punishment.

This points to the second consequence of sin--divine punishment. Not only is punishment inherent in sin itself, but the persistent Old Testament view is that God sends his active wrath on sinners.<sup>1</sup> That God punishes sin by an external physical means which causes suffering<sup>2</sup> can be illustrated from Gen. 3 or from almost any page of prophetic or Deuteronomic writings.<sup>3</sup> Such punishment was not withheld from God's covenant people. In fact, divine love and wrath

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1. So H. Wheeler Robinson, The Religious Ideas of the Old Testament (London: Duckworth and Co., 1913), 161f.; von Rad, Theologie . . ., 264f.; Mowinkel, Religion . . ., p. 84, where he notes with approval that Johs. Pedersen put "sin and Curse" in the same chapter of his work on Israel; Jacob, Theology . . ., 114ff.
  2. Walther Eichrodt, Theologie des Alten Testaments (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1933-39), III, 124f., points out that this punishment was never thought of as being equal to the sin. It is obvious in much of the Hexateuch narrative (long before Job) that there was no mechanical correspondence between divine favor and external conditions (p. 126).
  3. H. Wheeler Robinson, The Religious Ideas . . ., 161f. A classic example of this retribution is found in II Sam. 11-20 where it is seen that David's sin with Bathsheba bring numerous retributive results.

were united in the inscrutable wisdom of God:

'You only have I known  
of all the families of the earth;  
therefore I will punish you  
for all your iniquities.'

Amos 3.2

The Extent of Sin: The Old Testament says little specifically about the prevalence of sin,<sup>1</sup> but its conception of the demands of God and its understanding of the nature of sin implies that all men are sinners. The Yahwist implies this in his stories of the disobedience of the original parents and of the early groups of men (Gen. 2-11).<sup>2</sup> The latter, which might be called "societary sins" or sins which Israel commits corporately,<sup>3</sup> are the kind of sin most frequently mentioned by the prophets and Deuteronomic writings.<sup>4</sup> Not only is sin presented as an extensive phenomenon, but by some thinkers of later times it is portrayed as deeply penetrating in its effects (e.g. Ps. 51).<sup>5</sup>

1. See I Kings 8.46; Ps. 14.2f.; 130.3; 143.2b; Prov. 20.9; Eccl. 7.20. See Edmond Jacob, Theology of the Old Testament, trans. A. W. Heathcote and P. J. Allcock (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1958), p. 238.
2. So Th. C. Vriezen, An Outline of Old Testament Theology, trans. S. Nuijten (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958), p. 210.
3. E. g. Ex. 32.7ff.; Deut. 28.15ff.; Ezra 10.6ff.; etc.
4. For a modern statement of this see Lesslie Newbigin, Sin and Salvation (London: SCM Press, 1956), p. 36.
5. See Smith, The Bible Doctrine of Sin . . . , p. 41.

To summarise, sin is the rebelliousness of the people of God against his gracious covenant relationship. Though it is generally considered to be wilful, its explanation ultimately involves a mystery. Sin results in guilt, in separation from God and in some kind of tangible punishment. Forgiveness is presented as part of God's answer to sin.



## CHAPTER I

### DIVINE FORGIVENESS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

As with the concept of sin in the Old Testament, so it is with that of divine forgiveness. The key to its meaning is found in the Israelite understanding of Yahweh<sup>1</sup> and their interpretation of his dealings with their nation. It thus becomes necessary to review both the various terms and the historical development of the concept. \*

#### Specific Terms and Metaphorical Expressions for Forgiveness

𐤎𐤓𐤕

-- This is the only proper term for forgiveness in the Old Testament. In its 50 occurrences it is only used with the abstract meaning of "forgive," so there is in Hebrew no clue to its original meaning.<sup>2</sup> It appears in various

1. This distinctive name for God (Ex. 3.14) will be generally used throughout this section.
2. So J. J. Stamm, Erloesen und Vergeben im Alten Testament: Eine begriffsgeschichtliche Untersuchung (Bern: A. Franke A. G., 1940), p. 57. He suggests that it probably shares a common primitive Semitic root with the Accadian *sālāhu* which means "to sprinkle." This latter word is found in medical usage where the sick are sprinkled with oil or water for healing. It is also found in cultic usage, but it is not certain whether it is there a sacramental act

strata of the Old Testament, and its significance sometimes changes, as will be seen in the later review of the concept. In all its occurrences Yahweh is the one who forgives.<sup>1</sup>

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This is not a proper term for forgiveness but an occasional one. It appears almost 100 times and may have the meanings "cover one (used figuratively for "expiate"), pacify, make propitiation."<sup>2</sup> The etymology of the root is uncertain.<sup>3</sup> A convenient history of the investigations that have been made may be found in G. Buchanan Gray's fine work on sacrifice.<sup>4</sup>

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or merely accompanies or prepares for such an act. The abstract idea "forgive" may have developed from the common primitive root, with the Accadian descendent keeping the original concrete significance. Steps along this way may have been the application of "to sprinkle (for cleansing)" to spiritual stains and the exercise of this act through a divine subject. That such a development is quite possible is seen from the Hebrew use of "wash away" and "cleanse" as metaphors for "forgive."

1. So Koehler, Old Testament . . ., p. 217; C. Ryder Smith, The Bible Doctrine of Grace and Related Doctrines (London: The Epworth Press, 1956), p. 15.
2. BDB.
3. Investigations have shown several possibilities for the origin and development of the word. Some have stressed its relationship to the Arabic kafara and held that it originally meant "to cover." Others have stressed its relationship to the Accadian kuppuru and have suggested that its original meaning was "to wipe away"; and there have been other suggestions.
4. Sacrifice in the Old Testament: Its Theory and Practice (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1925), 67ff.

He holds,<sup>1</sup> with A.R.S. Kennedy,<sup>2</sup> that the original meaning is of secondary importance. On the basis of its usage in the Old Testament he concludes that

'to make expiation' is the most adequate rendering of  $\text{כִּפֶּה}$  used in its technical sense and without a direct object, i.e. that is throughout Ezekiel and P; the sense to expiate also attaches to the verb in the earlier and later (Ecclus. 3.30) literature when it is construed with an accusative of the sin, though the idea of propitiation obviously comes to the front in the rare examples of personal objects to the verb.<sup>3</sup>

The occurrences of  $\text{כִּפֶּה}$  may be classified into three groups. a) In a few places it is used for men pacifying the wrath of other men.<sup>4</sup> It is never used in this way of God; it is never suggested that the wrath or face of God might be "covered" or pacified.<sup>5</sup> b) There are numerous occurrences

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1. Ibid., 67f.

2. "Sacrifice and Offering," HDB (One Volume), p. 817.

3. Gray, Sacrifice . . ., p. 74. So also Kennedy, HDB (One Volume), 817, who states, "Applied to material objects, such as the altar, kipper is little more than a synonym of tihar and chitte; applied to persons, it is the summary expression of the rites by which the offender against the holiness of God is made fit to receive the Divine forgiveness and to be re-admitted to the fellowship and worship of the theocratic community."

4. See Gen. 32.21; Prov. 16.14; Is. 47.11.

5. So Davidson, The Theology . . ., p. 321; Gray, Sacrifice . . ., p. 74; Johs. Pedersen, Israel: Its Life and Culture, trans. A. Møller and A. I. Fausbøll (London: Oxford University Press, 1926-40), III-IV, 361; H. Wheeler Robinson, Inspiration . . ., p. 219.



where the verb is used for the expiation of sins apart from the cult sacrifices.<sup>1</sup> Frequently, Yahweh is considered the subject;<sup>2</sup> when this is the case "expiate" becomes almost identical with "forgive."<sup>3</sup> c) The largest group of occurrences (approx. 70) is found in the Code of Holiness, Priests' Code and Ezekiel.<sup>4</sup> Within this group it is important to note the frequent connection with  $\text{כִּפֹּר}$ . The phrase, "... and the priest shall make atonement ( $\text{כִּפֹּר}$ ) for them and they shall be forgiven ( $\text{כִּלְּפָדֵם}$ )," is repeated with slight variations twelve times in Leviticus and Numbers.<sup>5</sup> Johs. Pedersen is correct in noting that this obliteration ( $\text{כִּפֹּר}$ ) and forgiveness ( $\text{כִּלְּפָדֵם}$ ) of sins are "two aspects of the same matter."<sup>6</sup>

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1. See Ex. 32.30; Num. 17.11, 12; 25.13; II Sam. 21.3.

2. See e.g. Deut. 21.8a; Ps. 65.4; 78.38; Jer. 18.23; Ezek. 16.63.

3. So Koehler, Old Testament . . . , p. 213; Stamm, Erloesen und Vergeben . . . , p. 59; Sven Herner, Suehne und Vergeltung in Israel (Lund: C.W.K. Gleerups Förlag, 1942), p. 3; Burrows, An Outline . . . , p. 179; Otto Procksch, Theologie des Alten Testaments (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann Verlag, 1949), p. 666.

4. HDB. See also the detailed outline of uses by S. R. Driver, "Propitiation," HDB, IV, 130.

5. So Driver, HDB, IV, 130.

6. Israel: . . . , III-IV, 362.

### Metaphorical Expression

A number of different figurative expressions are employed in the Old Testament to convey the idea of forgiveness. In this group may also be listed several paraphrases for the same idea.

#### "The taking away of sin"

The most frequent metaphor for forgiveness is

לִישׁ אָשַׁף which means "to take away sin (guilt)." The verb אָשַׁף occurs 655 times in the Old Testament and generally has the meanings "lift, carry, take."<sup>1</sup> Most of the time (approx. 600) the verb refers simply to the lifting up, carrying or taking away of some object, but there are numerous places where it means forgiveness—that bestowed by one person to another or by God to men.<sup>2</sup>

When אָשַׁף is used in the sense of forgive and without לִישׁ, etc. as its object, it has a complete abstract significance and is equivalent to נָשַׁח. When it occurs with לִישׁ and other words for sin, then it is difficult to ascertain what the metaphor really pictures as happening. In passages like Gen. 4.13 and Num. 14.34 punishment or guilt is "borne," and from this it is a short step to "bear away." The passage

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1. BDB.

2. E.g., Ex. 32.32; 34.6; Num. 14.18; Josh. 24.19; Job 7.21; Ps. 25.18; 32.1,5; 85.3; Is. 33.24; Hos. 14.3; Mic. 7.18.

which describes the male goat ritual on the Day of Atonement is very instructive on this point. After the high priest lays his hands on the head of the live goat, confesses all the sins of the people, and sends him away into the wilderness, it is said,

The goat shall bear all their iniquities upon him to a solitary land.

Lev. 16.22

This old ceremony probably lies at the basis of the metaphor.<sup>1</sup> Later the idea contained in the old rite takes on a deep spiritual quality in Deutero-Isaiah. There it is said of the Servant of Yahweh, who acts in voluntary obedience:

. . . yet he bore the sin of many,  
and made intercession for the transgressors.

Is. 53.12c

### "To pass over sin"

The verb פָּרַח is widely used (approx. 548 times) and means "pass over, through, by, pass on."<sup>2</sup> In the Hiph'il it occurs a few times as a metaphor expressing the idea "forgive."<sup>3</sup> It is a weak term for forgiveness. Though it once refers to the complete removal of sin (Zech. 3.4), the thought of over-looking and non-observing is dominant.

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1. So Stamm, Erloesen und Vergeben . . ., p. 70.

2. BDB.

3. See II Sam. 12.13; 24.10; Job 7.21; Mic. 7.18; Zech. 3.4.

"To cover sin"

The verb  $\text{כָּסַף}$  appears well over 100 times with the meaning "cover or cover over." It is used on several occasions to mean "expiate" or "forgive" sins.<sup>1</sup> There is evidence that it belongs more to the metaphors for "expiation" than to those for "forgiveness,"<sup>2</sup> yet, as noted previously, when Yahweh is considered the subject, it is almost equivalent to "forgive."

"To wipe off sins" (etc.)

In the same group may be placed those verbs which express some kind of cleansing of sin. (1) The verb  $\text{מָחָה}$  means "wipe (or) wipe out." When it is used with  $\text{חַטָּאת}$  and other terms for sin, it is generally translated "blot out" in the sense of obliterate from memory.<sup>3</sup> There are occurrences of the term which indicate that the original reference was to the act of cleansing.<sup>4</sup> In the background would be the idea that sin was a stain or pollution that might be cleansed. It is, however, obvious from its recurrent use with  $\text{חַטָּאת}$  that the abstract idea of "forgive" predominates. (2) The verb  $\text{רָחַץ}$  means to "wash" by treading and generally refers to

1. See Neh. 3.37; Ps. 32.1; 85.3; Prov. 17.9; cf. Prov. 10.12.

2. So Stamm, Erloesen und Vergeben . . ., p. 73.

3. BDB. See Ps. 51.3; 109.14; Is. 43.25; 44.22; Jer. 18.23.

4. So Stamm, Erloesen und Vergeben . . ., p. 74.



washing out garments where the texture is to be cleansed throughout.<sup>1</sup> It is twice used as a vivid metaphor for forgiveness (Ps. 51.4,9). (3) A parallel verb is  $\text{נָּחַץ}$ . In the Pi'el it means "cleanse or purify,"<sup>2</sup> and is used several times as a metaphor for God's forgiveness.<sup>3</sup>

### Occasional Metaphors

Several expressions for divine forgiveness appear but once or twice and may be simply listed.

- (1) Sin is said to be "removed" ( $\text{נָּחַץ}$ ) in Ps. 103.12.
- (2) It is tread under foot ( $\text{נָּחַץ}$ ) in Mic. 7.19.
- (3) Yahweh "casts" ( $\text{נָּחַץ}$ ) it away or behind his back in Mic. 7.19 and Is. 38.17.
- (4) Yahweh is asked to "hide" ( $\text{נָּחַץ}$ ) his face from sins (Ps. 51.11).
- (5) Guilt is "removed" or "taken away" ( $\text{נָּחַץ}$ ) in Is. 6.7b.
- (6) Again Yahweh "removes" ( $\text{נָּחַץ}$ ) guilt in Zech. 3.9.
- (7) Yahweh will "redeem" ( $\text{נָּחַץ}$ ) from sins in Ps. 130.8.
- (8) Yahweh is asked to "deliver" ( $\text{נָּחַץ}$ ) the petitioner from sins in Ps. 39.9.

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1. EDB; James Kennedy, Studies in Hebrew Synonyms (Edinburgh: Williams and Norgate, 1898), p. 17.

2. EDB.

3. See Lev. 16.30; Ps. 51.4,9; Jer. 33.8; Ezek. 36.33.

Possibly other verbs could be listed,<sup>1</sup> but these are sufficient to indicate the variety in the Old Testament writings.

### Paraphrases for Forgiveness

(1) "To remember no more" ( $\text{לֹא יִזְכֹּר}$ ) is used several times as an expression of forgiveness.<sup>2</sup> The basic idea seems to be that sin is no longer noticed or thought of. (2) The phrase "not to impute" ( $\text{לֹא יִסְּבֶה}$ ) occurs in Ps. 32.2a in parallel with other terms for forgiveness. (3) Likewise the phrase "not to regard" ( $\text{לֹא יִחַל}$ ) . . . sin" used in Deut. 9.27 suggests the idea of forgiveness. (4) The phrase "to heal" ( $\text{לִרְפֹּא}$ ) is of special interest. It is frequently apparent in the Old Testament that sin and sickness belong together and that healing and forgiveness correspond.<sup>3</sup> When Yahweh is considered the subject of the verb "to heal," there is the meaning of restore to favor and, often, forgiveness.<sup>4</sup> The meaning seems to be so close to that of forgiveness in three Isaiah occurrences (6.10; 53.5; 57.18) that the Targum translators translated it with the specific Aramaic word "forgive."<sup>5</sup>

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1. E.g.  $\text{לִיִּי}$  ("to delight in, to accept"): II Sam. 24.23; Is. 40.2; Jer. 14.10,12; Ezek. 20.40f.; 43.27; Hos. 8.13.
  2. See Ps. 79.8; Is. 43.25; 64.8a; Jer. 31.34.
  3. So Stamm, Erloesen und Vergeben . . . , p. 84. See the list of citations supporting this collected by Jacob, Theology . . . , p. 238.
  4. So BDB; Koehler, Old Testament . . . , p. 216; Procksch, Theologie . . . , 666f. See, for example, Ps. 41.5; 103.3; Is. 6.10; 53.5; 57.18,19; Jer. 3.22; Hos. 7.1a; 14.5.
  5. So Matthew Black, An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts (2d ed.; Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1954), p. 156.

The Concept of Divine Forgiveness in the Different  
Strata of the Old Testament

The Pre-exilic Narrative Literature

When the passages containing the specific terms and metaphors for forgiveness are noted, one declaration that is often echoed in later writings<sup>1</sup> stands out:

'The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving (Heb. רַחוּם; LXX. ἀφαιρῶν) iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation.'

Ex. 34.6f.

Whether this classic statement belonged originally to the Yahwistic source or is from the hand of a later editor,<sup>2</sup> it serves as a good introduction to the ideas in the early writings. Yahweh is considered to be one who both forgives sins and sends punishment. There is here no clarifying statement as to the relation between the two; both are simply asserted. This implies that Yahweh was considered to have sovereign freedom. He could not be manipulated, yet there could be confidence that forgiveness as well as wrath belonged to his nature.

1. E.g., Num. 14.18; Neh. 9.17; Ps. 86.15; 145.8; Joel 3.13; Jonah 4.2; cf. also Ps. 89.30-34; 99.8.
2. See Rowley, The Faith . . ., p. 62, note 3, for a list of authorities on both sides.



At the Sinai revelation in Ex. 34.9 Moses is humbled and prays for Yahweh to pardon (Heb.  $\text{נָּשָׁחַן}$ ; LXX.  $\acute{\alpha}\phi\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\iota\varsigma$ ) his iniquities and those of the stiff-necked people; his prayer is apparently granted for in the next verse Yahweh reiterates his covenanting purpose. Later Moses has occasion<sup>1</sup> to repeat almost the same petition; he seeks pardon (Num. 14.19: Heb.  $\text{נָּשָׁחַן}$ ; LXX.  $\acute{\alpha}\phi\epsilon\varsigma$ ) for the people on the basis of Yahweh's steadfast love and his previous forgiveness (Heb.  $\text{נָּשָׁחַן}$ ; LXX.  $\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\epsilon\omega\varsigma$  . . .  $\acute{\epsilon}\chi\acute{\epsilon}\nu\omicron\upsilon$ ) since they left Egypt. Yahweh declares that he has pardoned according to Moses' petition, but will punish the people by not letting them (except for Caleb) see the land promised to their fathers.

On other occasions (Josh. 24.19; Ex. 23.21; a form of  $\text{נָּשָׁחַן}$  in both places) there is the warning that Yahweh will not forgive those who are rebellious against him. The warning proves to be true. When Moses prays for forgiveness (Ex. 32.32: Heb.  $\text{נָּשָׁחַן}$ ; LXX.  $\acute{\alpha}\phi\epsilon\upsilon$  . . .  $\acute{\alpha}\phi\epsilon\varsigma$ ) for the people who have sinned in the matter of the golden calf, pardon is denied; but mercy does appear in that the punishment is postponed to a future date (vss. 14, 34).<sup>2</sup> When David peni-

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1. When the people disobey Yahweh and murmur against the leadership of Aaron and Moses, Num. 14.
  2. A similar situation is found in I Sam. 15.25, where Saul's petition for pardon (Heb.  $\text{נָּשָׁחַן}$ ; LXX.  $\acute{\alpha}\rho\omicron\upsilon$ ) is denied, yet not totally.

tently seeks pardon (II Sam. 24.10: Heb.  $\text{נָּשָׁחַן}$ ; LXX.

$\text{παρεβίβασον}$ ) for his sin of numbering the people, there is no direct answer; but the plague which Yahweh sent as punishment against the whole land was stopped before it struck Jerusalem.<sup>1</sup>

Probably the clearest statement of God's forgiveness, outside the Hexateuch, is that which Nathan assured David (II Sam. 12.13).<sup>2</sup> When David is thoroughly humbled and is penitent before God because of his sin in the matter of Uriah and Bathsheba, Nathan declares, "The Lord has put away (Heb.  $\text{נָּשָׁחַן}$ ; LXX.  $\text{παρεβίβασεν}$ ) your sin." Later David's child dies and other tragedies befall his house (II Sam. 12.14). Thus, the episode clearly pictures the abstract religious idea of forgiveness. That is, forgiveness is the removal of guilt, the healing of a broken relationship with God and not, necessarily, the removal of punishment or the consequences of sin.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Cf. Elisha's assurance of indulgence at Naaman's request for forgiveness (Heb.  $\text{נָּשָׁחַן}$ ; LXX.  $\text{ἐλάσεται}$ ), when he worships in the house of Rimmon (II Kings 5.18).
  2. So Stamm, *Erlösen und Vergeben* . . . , 108f. He holds that this episode with Nathan (II Sam. 12.1-15a) is a later insertion into the narrative and cites numerous authorities.
  3. So H. H. Rowley, *The Meaning of Sacrifice in the Old Testament* (Reprinted from the "Bulletin of John Rylands Library," Vol. 33, No. 1; Manchester: The Librarian, The John Rylands Library, and the Manchester University Press, 1950), pp. 99ff.

Apart from the specific terminology, the idea of God's merciful dealings with the guilty is still frequently apparent. Adam and Eve are banished from the garden in punishment, but God provides clothing for them (Gen. 3.21). Cain is cursed on account of his sin, but he is given a mark and is promised God's protection (Gen. 4.11ff.). The great flood was sent as a punishment on the wickedness of man (Gen. 6.5ff.); yet afterwards God (smelling the aroma of Noah's burnt-offering) promises that such destruction shall never occur again (Gen. 8.21f.). The mercy of God is seen in his care for Sarai's contemptuous Egyptian maid, Hagar (Gen. 16.4-11). His readiness to be sparing is seen in his dialogue with Abraham over the wicked people of Sodom (Gen. 18.22ff.). Again divine mercy is seen in Abraham's being allowed to return unharmed from Egypt after he had lied to Abimelech (Gen. 20), in God's gracious dealings with the deceitful Jacob and in his beneficent guiding of the fates of the brothers of Joseph. In all of these instances there is a blending of punishment and mercy for the disobedient.

Summary: For the narrative literature the statement of Exodus 34.6f. is a valid affirmation of the understanding of God's dealing with sinners. He is forgiving (i.e. takes away guilt), yet he also sends punishment on them. Both his forgiveness and his punishment usually manifest themselves in

an historical way. That is, in the case of forgiveness there occurs concurrently some degree of relief from external distress.<sup>1</sup>

Does this conception of forgiveness envisage a change in the attitude and actions of God toward sinners? Yes, such an anthropopathic understanding of God is definitely seen in some of the dialogues between Moses or Abraham and God. These men appear to persuade God, on the basis of his faithfulness, or honor, to turn away his wrath and forgive the people. Of course, it was God who initially called these men and gave to them the positions they held as effective intercessors; that is, previous to the sin of the people God had provided for them a means of grace in these "mediators." It may be said, then, that it is a gracious, forgiving God who punishes sinners.

When God grants forgiveness in these writings, it is usually in response to a plea by a man of God,<sup>2</sup> or by the sinner himself.<sup>3</sup> These requests usually contain a penitent acknowledgment of guilt and desire to have the relationship between themselves and God put right.

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1. Stamm, Erloesen und Vergeben . . ., p. 110, maintains that this is always the case.
  2. E.g., Abraham intercedes for the Sodomites, and Abimelech and Moses do numerous times for the Israelites. On this see Herner, Suehne und Vergebung . . ., pp. 16-22.
  3. E.g., Moses, Ex. 34.9; David, II Sam. 12.13; cf. also passages that speak of pleas to Yahweh by means of sacrifice: I Sam. 3.14; 6.4; 26.19.



### The Pre-exilic Prophets

In the 8th. and 7th. century prophets<sup>1</sup> there is both perpetuation of earlier understanding and development in the concept of forgiveness. It must be recognized, however, that the forgiving mercy of God to sinners is not prominent with these men; indeed, the opposite is true. They emphasize Yahweh's certain punishment of a rebellious nation. Israel had been redeemed from Egypt by Yahweh and had entered into the covenant with him at Sinai, agreeing to serve only Yahweh and to obey his ethical commands (cf. e.g. Deut. 6; Is. 5.1-7). This covenant the prophets saw continually ignored. Greed for material gain had led many to disregard its ethical requirements. And the beguiling worship of the fertility god, Baal, caused widespread apostasy from it. The prophetic message may be illustrated by a quotation from Jeremiah:

'How can I pardon (Heb. <sup>לֹא אֶפְדֶּה</sup>; LXX <sup>ἄνεως ἐξιῶμαι</sup>) you?  
 Your children have forsaken me,  
 and have sworn by those who are no gods.  
 When I fed them to the full,  
 they committed adultery  
 and trooped to the houses of harlots.

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1. Amos, Hosea, Isaiah (1-39), Micah, Zephaniah, Jeremiah. Deuteronomy is also included, since it embodies so much of the prophetic outlook. For a brief and recent statement on Deuteronomy's relationship to the 8th. century prophets see H. Cunliffe-Jones, Deuteronomy: Introduction and Commentary (London: S.C.M., 1951) pp. 27f. Habakkuk and Nahum will not be considered, since they are occupied with other matters.

They were well-fed lusty stallions,  
each neighing for his neighbor's wife.  
Shall I not punish them for these things?  
                                says the Lord;  
and shall I not avenge myself  
on a nation such as this?'         J

It was the prophets' conviction that the judgment of Yahweh was coming. Consequently, they called the nation to turn to Yahweh in penitence and obedience. For example,

Seek the Lord, all you humble of the land,  
who do his commands;  
Seek righteousness, seek humility;  
perhaps you may be hidden  
on the day of the wrath of the Lord.  
Zeph. 2.3

Sometimes their message took a harsher form. Knowing that the pride, avarice and Baal worship of the people gave little promise of repentance, they prophesied a judgment of complete doom. For example,

'I will utterly sweep away everything  
from the face of the earth,' says the Lord.  
Zeph. 1.2

During the generations of the monarchy it was the cult with its various sacrifices and feasts which gave prominence to the reconciling and forgiving nature of Yahweh.<sup>2</sup> Yet the

1. Cf. Deut. 8.19f. for a similar warning that such behavior would bring Yahweh's judgment.

2. See the subsequent section on the Priestly Writings, pp. 47 ff. With regard to the use of the cult in pre-exilic generations, see Vriezen, *An Outline* . . . , 276ff.



nation to repent, they assume that Yahweh will forgive.<sup>1</sup>

In a prophecy of Jeremiah it is said, "It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I intend to do to them, so that every one may turn from his evil way, and that I may forgive (Heb.  $\text{נָסַח}$ ; LXX.  $\epsilon\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ ) their iniquity and their sin" (36.3).<sup>2</sup>

The idea of forgiveness is implicit in the exhortation of Amos: "Seek the Lord and live . . ."

(5.6).<sup>3</sup> The context shows that this "life" was primarily freedom from the destruction of outside enemies, but it probably included the promise of forgiveness which was generally the basis of freedom from such destruction.<sup>4</sup> The conviction that Yahweh will forgive (and accompany it with the removal of disaster) lies behind the words of Hosea:

Return, O Israel, to the Lord your God,  
for you have stumbled because of your iniquity.  
14.1

Such exhortations are frequent<sup>5</sup> in pre-exilic prophets, and they all involve the faith that God will be merciful to the penitent sinners.<sup>6</sup>

1. So Eichrodt, Theologie . . ., III, 127.

2. Cf. also Is. 6.10, where this idea is expressed negatively.

3. Cf. also vss. 4, 14.

4. So Herner, Suehne und Vergebung . . ., 31f.; Stamm, Erloesen und Vergeben . . ., 117f.

5. E.g., Is. 1.18f.; 30.15; Jer. 3.12,22.

6. So Stamm, Erloesen und Vergeben . . ., p. 118.



When the prophets pray to God interceding in behalf of the sinful people there is the underlying assumption that he is merciful as well as just. Amos beseeches God to forgive (Heb.  $\text{נָשׁוּב}$ ; LXX.  $\text{\textit{\kappa\alpha\iota\ \nu\epsilon\iota\tau\epsilon\iota}}$ , 7.2). He seeks to avert a disaster which God was sending as punishment upon the faithless nation. God mercifully "repents," answering, "It shall not be" (7.2f.). Jeremiah often intercedes for the apostate people:

'Though our iniquities testify against us,  
act, O Lord, for thy name's sake;  
for our backslidings are many,  
we have sinned against thee.'

14.7

Though Jeremiah was possibly the prophet who had least hope that the people would repent and proceeded to describe punishment in awesome terms, yet these intercessory prayers show his faith that God was not without mercy and forgiveness.

When the word "heal" ( $\text{\textit{\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha\ \tau\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\iota\omega}}$ ) is recognized as sometimes conveying the idea of forgiveness, it is yet clearer that these prophets knew of a mercy in the nature of Yahweh which forgives sins. Jeremiah prophesies:

'Return, O faithless sons,  
I will heal your faithlessness.'

3.22a.

Several other examples could be cited,<sup>1</sup> but the point is sufficiently clear.

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1. E.g., Is. 6.10; Hos. 6.1; 7.1; 14.5; etc.

One of the most striking features of the pre-exilic prophetic witness is its eschatological hope. It was the faith of these prophets that beyond the time of punishment there would be a time when sins would be forgiven. This hope is an important aspect of the "Golden Age" that was expected.<sup>1</sup> The idea may be found to lie implicit in numerous passages about the remnant and the future age, but only those which explicitly refer to forgiveness will be noted here. The passage in Jeremiah 31 which proclaims the new covenant is probably the most important.

Behold, the days are coming says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant which they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each man teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive (Heb.  $\text{נָשָׁחַ$  ; LXX.  $\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\omega\varsigma \epsilon\sigma\sigma\omega\mu\epsilon\iota$  ) their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

31.31-34

Here the forgiveness of sins is seen to be an integral part of the new covenant.<sup>2</sup> It is further notable that Jeremiah's con-

1. See Rowley, The Faith . . . , Chap. VII.

2. So R. B. Y. Scott, The Relevance of the Prophets (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1944), p. 130.

ception of the new covenant is one of pure grace. No exhortation to know the Lord will be needed, for he will write his law upon their hearts.

Several other passages which refer to the forgiveness of sins in the future age of salvation may have come from later writers,<sup>1</sup> but they have traditionally been attributed to these pre-exilic prophets. In Micah it is said:

He will again have compassion upon us,  
he will tread our iniquities under foot.  
Thou wilt cast all our sins  
into the depths of the sea.

7.19

In the future, new Jerusalem God will provide many blessings,

And no inhabitant will say, 'I am sick';  
the people who dwell there will  
be forgiven (Heb.  $\chi\psi\iota$ ; LXX.  $\phi\epsilon\theta\eta$ ) their iniquity.  
Is. 33.24

Again, in Jeremiah:

'In those days and in that time, says the Lord,  
iniquity shall be sought in Israel, and there shall  
be none; and sin in Judah, and none shall be found;  
for I will pardon (Heb.  $\eta\gamma\delta\chi$ ; LXX.  $\eta\epsilon\omega\varsigma \epsilon\sigma\tau\eta\mu\epsilon$ ) those  
whom I leave as a remnant.

50.20; so also 33.8

Summary: It may be said that the forgiveness of sins in the pre-exilic prophets is essentially the same as that of the early narrative literature. Though the prophets' emphasis

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1. So Stamm, Erloesen und Vergeben . . ., 124f.

on the judgment of Yahweh led them at times to declare that Yahweh would not forgive, it is obvious that they shared the common tradition that he was always ready to do so.<sup>1</sup> This forgiveness was his removal of the barrier, the guilt of sins which stood between himself and men, coupled with the removal or mitigation of punishment.<sup>2</sup> The gift almost always assumed penitence on the part of the sinner. The new idea not found in the narrative literature is an eschatological forgiveness which was to be the unconditioned gift of God.

### The Exilic Prophets

In the prophet Ezekiel the conception of God's forgiveness appears in four major ways. First, it is clearly implied in the frequent prophecies which call for repentance:<sup>3</sup>

'But if a wicked man turns ( *וָשׁוּב* ) away from all his sins which he has committed and keeps all my statutes and does what is lawful and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die. None of the transgression which he has committed shall be remembered against him; for the righteousness which he has done he shall live. Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, says the Lord God, and not rather that he should turn from his way and live?'

18.21-23<sup>4</sup>

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1. So Scott, The Relevance . . ., p. 105.
  2. So Stamm, Erloesen und Vergeben . . ., p. 119. This seems to be true for that eschatological forgiveness also, for in the various pictures of the "Golden Age" there are descriptions of the economic prosperity and the political safety which the nation shall enjoy.
  3. So. W. H. Bennett, The Religion of the Post-Exilic Prophets (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1907), p. 33.
  4. Cf. also 18.27f; 33.11ff. It is also implicit in the commissions to Ezekiel to give warning: 3.16.b-21; 33.7-9.



In this promise to grant life to the penitent and to forget his past sins there is implied the forgiveness of those sins. It is possible that the emphasis on obedience to the law tends to minimize the graciousness of Yahweh's forgiveness, but the prophet is generally well aware that Israel does not deserve Yahweh's favor.

In chapter 20 the prophet reviews the history of Israel and interprets the whole as a continual manifestation of the grace of Yahweh. The rebelliousness of the people repeatedly deserved complete destruction, but Yahweh spared them for the sake of his name, that is, for the sake of his own honor or nature (20.9,14,22,44).<sup>1</sup> This grace, he believed, would continue to the exiles, since they were to return to their homeland (20.34; 28.25; 34.12ff.; 36.8ff.; 37). In the new Jerusalem after this return there would be forgiveness (Heb.  $\square \text{ } \text{?} \text{ } \text{?}$ ; LXX.  $\pi\rho\omicron\sigma\delta\epsilon\iota\varsigma\alpha\mu\alpha\iota$ ) for the purged servants of Yahweh (20.40ff.).

Thirdly, Ezekiel joins Jeremiah in prophesying a future eternal covenant.<sup>2</sup> When that time comes there will be peace and economic prosperity,<sup>3</sup> and there will be no more

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1. See Pedersen, *Israel . . .*, I-II, 245-59, for the significance of the "name" in Israelite thought.

2. Ezek. 16.60,62; 34.25; 36.28; 37.26.

3. Ezek. 16.53; 34.25ff.; cf. 36.30; 37.26.

sin for it will be forgiven (16.63: Heb. <sup>וְנִסְחָה</sup>; LXX. ἐξῆλκεσθαι) or cleansed (36.33: Heb. <sup>וְנִסְחָה</sup>; LXX. καθαρίσθαι). This forgiveness shall not be given because of man's righteousness or repentance but in order to vindicate the honor or name of Yahweh:

Thus says the Lord God: It is not for your sake, O House of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name . . . .

36.22b.

In the fourth place, it is significant that Ezekiel envisions a sacrificial worship in the new temple which will have God's complete approval (43.4ff.). This provides further evidence of the prophet's knowledge of divine forgiveness. The cult will be dealt with later, but it may be noted here that in the vision Ezekiel was given "ordinances for the altar" which provided for expiatory sacrifices both for the altar and for the people (43.18-27; 45.13-20). It is important to recognize that since God is considered to have authorized and directed this expiation (Chapters 40-47), it is equivalent to his forgiveness.

With the prophecies of Deutero-Isaiah there come further assertions of the reality of divine forgiveness and a deeper understanding of it. Like the prophets before him, he considers the whole Babylonian captivity to have been Yahweh's judgment upon the sins of Israel.<sup>1</sup> However, the major

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1. Is. 42.24f.; 50.1; 51.17,20.

thrust of his message is the proclamation of Yahweh's imminent deliverance by means of Cyrus. Prophesying at the end of the exile, he announces that the nation has suffered full penalty for her sins and will not experience the redeeming mercy of God. Thus, his prophecy begins:

Comfort, comfort my people  
says your God.  
Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,  
and cry to her  
that her warfare is ended,  
that her iniquity is pardoned (𐤒𐤔𐤒; LXX. ἀφέσις)<sup>1</sup>  
40.1-2a

This assurance of God's deliverance is also assurance of his forgiveness to the nation:

'I have swept away (𐤒𐤔𐤒<sup>2</sup>; LXX. ἀπὸλεψα) your  
transgressions like a cloud,  
and your sins like mist;  
return to me, for I have redeemed you.'

44.22

This verse is typical of a great part of the prophet's message. It is notable here that Yahweh's forgiveness precedes and gives cause for returning to him in penitence. This is consistent with the prophet's other oracles of grace; they were not based on anything which the Israelites had done or might do. Rather God's mercy to sinful Israel was based upon his

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1. Since 𐤒𐤔𐤒 can be translated "punishment," the verb may indicate not forgiveness but that the punishment of Jerusalem has been "paid up" or "accepted" as sufficient.
  2. Cf. the similar statement and use of 𐤒𐤔𐤒 in 43.25.

election of her,<sup>1</sup> his love for his people,<sup>2</sup> upon his faithfulness to the covenant,<sup>3</sup> or his honor (for the sake of his name).<sup>4</sup>

One of the most significant passages on divine forgiveness in the Old Testament is that found in the fourth Servant Song. In the latter part of the Nineteenth Century B. Duhm<sup>5</sup> isolated the four related "Servant Songs" (Is. 42.1-4; 49.1-6; 50.4-9; 52.13-53.12) which are recognized today. Some scholars would add other verses or passages, but these are the major ones for delineating the characteristics of the figure. For our purpose, the idea of the Servant envisaged by the prophet may be interpreted as a fluid concept--in some sense both an individual and a collective figure.<sup>6</sup> It is,

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1. Is. 41.8,9; 43.10,20; 44.1,2.

2. Is. 49.10,13; 51.3; 54.8,10.

3. This is implied in the frequent reference to Yahweh as the  $\text{יְהוָה}$ ; see Stamm, Erloesen und Vergeben . . ., p. 123.

4. Is. 43.25.

5. See A. S. Peake, The Servant of Yahweh (Manchester: The Manchester Univ. Press, 1931), pp. 4f.

6. For a historical review of the theories see Peake, The Servant . . ., pp. 1-74; Rowley, The Servant of the Lord and Other Essays on the Old Testament (London: Lutterworth Press, 1952), pp. 3-52; C. R. North, The Suffering Servant in Deutero-Isaiah (2d ed.; London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1956), pp. 6-116; cf. also Richard S. Cripps, The Prophets and the Atonement (London: S.P.C.K., 1929), pp. 8ff.



however, the mission of the Servant, his means of attaining it and its results that are important for this study.

Chosen by Yahweh and invested with his spirit (42.1), he is thus "marked out as Yahweh's agent and representative."<sup>1</sup> His mission is to do God's will--establish justice in the earth and to give his law to men (42.1,4).<sup>2</sup> The fundamental note which runs through these songs and finds its clearest expression in the fourth is that the servant is lowly and his mission involves dire suffering for the sake of others.<sup>3</sup>

Though there is considerable difference of opinion among scholars on textual details,<sup>4</sup> the general picture of the servant in the fourth song is clear. In the words of Helmer Ringgren,

The servant has been tormented and tortured, he has been ill, and his suffering has been looked upon by the bystanders as divine punishment. Finally, he died, and even in death he was counted a criminal. But later on God has given him satisfaction, he has exalted him and given him all that he had been without before. And then the bystanders had to admit that they had completely misunderstood his suffering. For he had not suffered for his own sins, but had borne the punishment of the

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1. S. H. Hooke, "The Theory and Practice of Substitution," VT, II (1952), 16.
  2. So Rowley, The Faith . . ., p. 197.
  3. So John Bright, The Kingdom of God (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1953), p. 148.
  4. See the discussion by W. Zimmerli and J. Jeremias, The Servant of God, trans. Harold Knight, et al ("Bible Key Words" From Gerhard Kittel's Theologisches Woerterbuch Zum Neuen Testament; London: S. C. M. Press, 1957), pp. 23-34.

transgression of the bystanders. This happened according to the will of God, and through this the sinners stand there as righteous men. His suffering was a vicarious suffering.<sup>1</sup>

A quotation from E. Lohse brings out more clearly the point of vicarious suffering and its bearing on the forgiveness (53.5) of the penitent observers:

Der Gottesknecht traegt die Krankheit seines Volkes, seiner Gemeinde. Er laedt ihre Schmerzen auf sich. Um ihrer Missetat willen ist er durchbohrt, zerschlagen infolge ihrer Verschuldungen. Durch sein Leiden bewirkt er ihnen Heilung. Gott liess ihn die Schuld der Vielen treffen, er schlug ihn mit Krankheit. In der abschliessenden Gottesrede wird noch einmal seine stellvertretende Hingabe, das Aufladen der Suende der und das Eintreten fuer die Uebeltaeter geschildert. Die grosse Bedeutung der Tat des 'Ebed' liegt darin, dass her die Suenden der Vielen auf sich nahm (V. 12). 'Indem der unschuldig leidende Gottesknecht die Suende der Vielen traegt, bedeutet das fuer diese ein Wegtragen oder Wegnehmen ihrer Suende.' Dieser Gedanke des stellvertretenden Leidens steht im Mittelpunkt des ganzen Liedes. Ja, das Leiden geht bis in den Tod. Der Sinn des stellvertretenden Leidens wird darin gefunden, dass der Knecht sein Leben zum Schuldopfer dahingab (V.10) Durch diese freiwillige Selbsthingabe des Knechtes ist der Friede mit Gott wiederhergestellt. Gott liess den Knecht leiden und liess ihn die Strafe treffen. Er ist es auch, der sein Leiden annahm und darum die Vergebung wirksam werden liess.<sup>2</sup>

It is notable that Deutero-Isaiah presents the forgiveness effected by the servant's sacrifice as being for all the nations.<sup>3</sup> This is consistent with his universal outlook elsewhere.

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1. The Messiah in the Old Testament (London: S.C.M. Press, 1956), pp. 49f.
  2. Maertyrer und Gottesknecht (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1955), p. 97.
  3. See Rowley, The Faith . . ., pp. 97f.

Summary: These two exilic prophets, like the other prophets before them, knew God as one who sends judgment on sinners. The exile was such a judgment on Israel. At the same time they held that God was gracious and forgiving to his people. The restoration from exile would be dramatic assurance. For Ezekiel it was sometime off, but for Deutero-Isaiah it was imminent. Both of these prophets emphasize God's forgiveness to the unworthy people. The penitent response of man is important, as has been noted, but it takes a secondary place and is generally considered to be a result of God's prevenient saving mercy.<sup>1</sup> God deals mercifully simply for the sake of his holy name, his love, his covenant faithfulness, etc.

Both prophets recognize a correlation between God's forgiveness of sins and his redemption from judgment or granting of material blessings.

The major contribution of Deutero-Isaiah is his conception of God's chosen servant who innocently suffers unto death the punishment which others deserve for their sin. That vicarious suffering becomes an expiatory sacrifice ( $\Pi\psi\chi'$ , 53.10) which removes the guilt of sin. When it is acknowledged in contrition by sinners, they are assured of divine forgiveness

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1. See Bennett, The Religion of . . ., pp. 304f.

## The Post-exilic Prophets

In Trito-Isaiah<sup>1</sup> (Chapters 56-66) a paraphrase for forgiveness appears in the prayer:

Be not exceedingly angry, O Lord,  
and remember not iniquity forever.  
64.8a

Besides this instance the forgiveness of sins is not directly mentioned in these prophecies. However, the idea is implicit in the prophecy of mercy for the humble and contrite in 57.15-19.<sup>2</sup> It is a pledge supported by the refrain, "I will heal him . . . I will heal him" (vss. 18f.).<sup>3</sup> This healing is the restoring of the penitents' broken relationship with God described in vs. 17<sup>4</sup>; thus, it probably includes the idea of forgiveness.

These passages of mercy to sinners appear in the midst of chapters which censure the religious and ethical sins of the people with a vehemency like that of the pre-exilic prophets. Consequently, each promise of mercy assumes a full turning to Yahweh in ethical righteousness and humility (e.g., 58.6f.).

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1. On this division of Isaiah see H. H. Rowley, "Introduction to the Old Testament," A Companion to the Bible, ed. T. W. Manson (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1939), pp. 53f.
  2. Cf. also Is. 58.8; 59.20.
  3. The verb is  $\text{רָפָא}$  both times.
  4. Cf. 59.2 for one of the clearest statements of this separation in the Old Testament.



There are also passages which speak of the glorious future day of salvation and the new everlasting covenant (60-62; 65.8-25). Like the previous prophets, these expected a "Golden Age" which would bring material and spiritual blessings to Israel in their homeland. Forgiveness of sins is not specifically mentioned, but it is probably meant to be implied by such ideas as the following:

For he has clothed me with the garments of salvation,  
 he has covered me with the robe of righteousness . . . .  
 61.10b

Several passages express approval of sacrificial worship<sup>1</sup> and may be further evidence of a faith in the forgiveness of God, but these references are not specific enough to warrant any conclusions.

That God forgives sins is not an explicit feature in the prophecies of Haggai, but the idea is assumed in his zeal for the temple, its cult and their restoration. Forgiveness, however, is prominent in Zechariah. He takes seriously the judgment of God on sin and calls for repentance which presupposes a pardoning God: "Return to me, says the Lord of hosts, and I will return to you . . . ." (1.3b). Like his contemporary, Haggai, Zechariah is zealous for the temple and cult. This gives further evidence of his knowledge of divine forgiveness.

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1. See Is. 56.6f.; 60.7; 66.20.

In Zechariah's vision of the glorious restoration of Jerusalem under the future Davidic leader an important role is played by God's forgiveness. The prophet sees that at that time God will remove the sin of the people. This is pictured in the vision of the angel removing the filthy garments ("iniquity") from the high-priest, Joshua (3.4) and in the promised removal (3.9:Heb.  $\text{וְנִסְּתָה הָאִשָּׁה הַזֹּאת מִן הָאָרֶץ}$ ; LXX.  $\alpha\phi\acute{\iota}\rho\eta\kappa\alpha$ ) of the guilt of the whole land. At the same time it is notable that this gracious purging of sins, which amounts to forgiveness, is accompanied by the material blessings of peace and prosperity (3.10).

The seventh night vision of Zechariah gives an interesting picture in which the iniquity of all the land is personified as a woman in a covered ephah being carried off into Babylon by two winged women (5.5-11). Whatever the details indicate, this ultimately is a declaration that God will remove the sin of the people.<sup>1</sup>

In Malachi the idea of forgiveness is clearly implied by his devotion to the temple cult and his zeal for its purity. To him God is merciful and will bless the people, but they must participate with their whole heart in the cultic sacrifices which God had ordained. When men bring the best of their

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1. So J. J. Stamm, Das Leiden des Unschuldigen in Babylon und Israel (Zurich: Zwingli-Verlag, 1946), p. 69.

flocks (not the blind and cripple ones), the "windows of heaven" would open and God would "pour down an overflowing blessing" upon them (3.10). This probably includes the forgiveness of sins (those sins which could find forgiveness through the cult), and explicitly includes peace and prosperity in the land (3.11f.).

In Malachi's doctrine of divine forgiveness a strong emphasis is laid on the obedience and fear of God which must precede that forgiveness. The blessings of God are for the obedient and righteous only; when "the day" comes, sinners will be burned as in an oven (3.19-24).

With the prophet Jonah there comes an important statement of the concept of God's forgiving grace. The prophet is commanded to go and preach repentance to Nineveh lest the wrath of God descend upon them. When Jonah finally goes, they do repent and God spares them (3.10). Jonah quotes (4.2) the famous promise of divine mercy of Exodus 34.6 and admits that he knew that Yahweh would forgive them; that was precisely why he fled to Tarshish. Here forgiveness includes the withholding of punishment; it is available apart from sacrifice (simply on the condition of repentance); and it is available to non-Israelites.<sup>1</sup>

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1. This is not the first time that a universalistic missionary note is struck in the Old Testament, but it is one of the clearest. For other passages, see the discussion by Burrows, An Outline . . ., 278ff.

Joel<sup>1</sup> recognizes the general view that God forgives the penitent (2.12f.). His devotion to the cult (1.9,13f.; 2.14) also implies that he knows of God's reconciling acts and intentions, yet the main attention of his prophecies is on other matters.

Summary: Both the terms for and the idea of God's pardon appear infrequently in these post-exilic prophets. Nevertheless, they are aware of God's mercy to sinners. Their conviction that God is gracious is usually implied in their devotion to the cult. It is also assumed in their calls for a penitent turning to God and in the expectation of Tristram Isaiah and Zechariah that the future "Golden Age" would be accompanied by the forgiveness of sins. Finally, it seems true to say that the formal means of grace seems to occupy more of the attention of these prophets than the grace of God itself.

#### Later Writings Influenced by Deuteronomic Thought

The wide influence of Deuteronomy upon later editors and writers of the Old Testament is well-known. In some of the places where this influence is obvious the concept of divine forgiveness is present.

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1. This is the last of the prophets which need to be considered. Obadiah is clearly occupied with other matters.



The temple-dedication prayer in I Kings 8 includes several petitions for pardon. In vs. 30 the petitioner seeks only forgiveness (Heb.  $\text{סָלַח}$ ; LXX.  $\text{ἀφ᾽ ἑσῆ}$ ) and implies that for God to hear the prayer of sinful people involves his pardon. In four other sections of the prayer it is assumed that the sin of the people results in a punishing disaster (military defeat, drought, famine, pestilence, captivity). When the people confess and turn again to God in supplication, the prayer is that they will be forgiven. To each petition is added the further request that the disaster be either removed or mitigated.

If it be true that the account of Abraham's plea for Sodom (Gen. 18.22b-33) shows Deuteronomic influence,<sup>1</sup> then the request for and promise of forgiveness<sup>2</sup> which it contains is again illustrative of the belief that sin results in punishment and that forgiveness brings relief from that punishment. The EVV usually translate  $\text{חָשׂוּ}$  here with the word "spare." This is probably correct since there is no word about repentance; there is only the attempt to save the city from destruction for the sake of a few just persons who live there.

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1. So Stamm, Erloesen und Vergeben . . ., pp. 127f.

2. See vs. 24: Heb.  $\text{חָשׂוּ אֶת־בְּנֵי־הָעִיר}$ ; LXX.  $\text{ἀνῆκευ}$ ; vs. 26: Heb.  $\text{חָשׂוּ אֶת־הָעִיר}$ ; LXX.  $\text{ἀφ᾽ ἑσῆ}$ .

In Daniel 9.4b-19 there appears another prayer which shows Deuteronomic influence.<sup>1</sup> The whole prayer is a confession of sin, an acknowledgment of the rightness of God's punishment and a plea for forgiveness. The petitioner believes that "To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness" (Heb. תְּחִלָּתֵךְ; LXX. ἐλεησέ(θ) 9.9), therefore, the conclusion of the prayer is the plea: "O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive" (Heb. תְּפִלָּתֵךְ; LXX. ἐλάσθητι). He prays also for that forgiveness to be accompanied by action to lessen the calamity (vs. 19). It is notable that the petitioner, who repeatedly acknowledges the requirement of obedience and penitence, asks for forgiveness in spite of the fact that the people have not returned to God. His request rests solely on the hope that God might forgive for his own sake (vss. 17,19) or on the ground of his great mercy (תְּחִלָּתֵךְ vs. 18).

Other such passages (e.g. Neh. 9.17) might be discussed, but these are sufficient to indicate the main lines of Deuteronomic influence. The general idea is that God punishes sin, yet he is also merciful and ready to forgive. This forgiveness would be a restoration of his favor accompanied by removal or lessening of wrath. Such mercy was not based on the inherent worth of men, but upon the covenanted grace of God. A full

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1. So Cunliffe-Jones, Deuteronomy . . ., p. 29.

turning to God in penitence and obedience is always recognized as required, but even where such was palpably lacking, petition for forgiveness was made.

### The Priestly Writings

The origin and initial significance of sacrifice are matters which have been the subject of many investigations.<sup>1</sup> Archeology and anthropology agree with the Yahwist writer that man has employed sacrifices since earliest times (Gen. 4.3ff.). Whatever be its genesis the post-exilic priestly writers considered Israel's cult to have been authorized by divine decree (Lev. 1.1; 4.1; *passim*); the assumed basis of the whole system was the forgiving, covenanting purpose of God.<sup>2</sup>

As to its basic meaning in Israel, H. H. Rowley cautions that no one view gives the clue to the interpretation of all sacrifice.<sup>3</sup> There were rites of commemoration, propitiation, communion and thanksgiving; there were also sacrifices which were authorized as means of expiation and assurance of

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1. For a good review of the older works see W. P. Paterson, "Sacrifice," HDB, IV, 329ff. See also Gray, Sacrifice ...; W. O. E. Oesterley, Sacrifices in Ancient Israel: their Origin, Purposes and Development (New York: Macmillan, 1937.)
  2. So Eichrodt, Theologie . . ., III, 128. Bernhard W. Anderson, Understanding the Old Testament (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1957), p. 46, writes that sacrifice was effective for atonement not because it worked magically "but because God had provided the means by which guilt was pardoned and holiness restored" [*italics his*].
  3. The Meaning of Sacrifice . . ., p. 78.



forgiveness. Though the especially designated expiatory sacrifices (  $\aleph \chi \nu \pi^1$  and  $\square \psi \chi$  ) appear only in post-exilic writings, scholars of recent decades have generally agreed that they, or the ideas they express, were probably in use long before.<sup>2</sup> They attained their prominence, however, after the exile when the consciousness of sin had deepened.<sup>3</sup>

Speaking generally, it may be said that the whole sacrificial cult was considered an appointed means of purifying sinners and of mediating the certainty of divine forgiveness.<sup>4</sup> However, this was the special significance of the sin and guilt-offerings and the Day of Atonement. The

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1. See the recent discussion of this by N. H. Sniath, "Sacrifice in the Old Testament," VT, 7 (July, 1957), 308-17. The Hebrews referred to this sacrifice as "the sin." It became the sin; it was got rid of. It was taken away so that it was no longer between the repentant sinner and God (p. 316).
  2. So Kennedy, HDB (One Volume), p. 815; Gray, Sacrifice . . ., pp. 66, 82ff.; N. H. Snaith, "The Priesthood and the Temple," A Companion to the Bible, p. 436; Pedersen, Israel . . ., III - IV, 358, 374; Rowley, The Meaning of Sacrifice . . ., p. 85.
  3. So A. C. Welch, Prophet and Priest in Old Israel (London: S.C.M. Press, 1936), Chapter IV.
  4. So G. F. Moore, "Sacrifice," Ency. Bib., IV, col. 4220; Kennedy, HDB (One Volume), pp. 817f.; Gray, Sacrifice . . ., p. 76, writes: ". . . broadly speaking, the sacrificial system as a whole is expiatory." So also Procksch, Theologie . . ., pp. 665f.; G. E. Wright, The Old Testament Against its Environment (London: S.C.M. Press, 1950), p. 104; Vriezen, An Outline of . . ., pp. 286, 288.



familiar strictures of the prophets<sup>1</sup> do not detract from their estimate of the cult. They were rather directed against the presumptuous attitude toward God which developed around it and the selfish, disobedient use of it.<sup>2</sup> They condemned any use of the cult as a magical or independently effective means of securing the favor of God.<sup>3</sup>

The assurance of forgiveness which came through the cult was usually expressed with the following (or similar) words: **וְנִסְחָה** --"and he shall be forgiven."<sup>4</sup> This promise was generally preceded by an expiation which was performed by the priest and usually involved an animal sacrifice with special manipulation of the blood.<sup>5</sup> Both the expiation and the consequent forgiveness mediated by the priests, were

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1. See footnote #1, p. 27.
  2. So Eichrodt, Theologie . . ., III, 121; and others.
  3. On the question of whether or not this was or implied a total rejection of the cult see Welch, Prophet and Priest . . .; the whole work is addressed to this problem. See also Wright, The Old Testament Against . . ., pp. 108ff., where relevant literature is cited.
  4. Lev. 4.20,26,31,35; 5.10,13,16,18,26; 19.22; Num. 15.25f.,28.
  5. See Lev. 17.11 for a partial explanation of the use of blood. We probably look in vain in the Old Testament for a clear statement of why the ritual use of blood expiated sins. On this see Kennedy, HDB (One Volume), p. 818; Eichrodt, Theologie . . ., III, 121. For the theory of substitution see Procksch, Theologie . . ., pp. 665f.; Hooke, VT, II, 2-17; Jacob, Theology . . ., p. 295.

considered to be the work and gift of God. With regard to the expiation W. Eichrodt<sup>1</sup> has pointed out that the priests did not have independent authority nor was the expiatory system considered an independently working affair. Rather both were subordinate to the saving will of God and given by his decree to his people to free them from sin and to maintain the covenant communion with himself.<sup>2</sup> With regard to the promise of forgiveness its source is indicated in the wording. In the places where forgiveness expressly follows expiation the words *וְנָסַח עָלָיו הַכֹּהֵן* are never followed by *וְנָסַח לוֹ*, "and he [the priest] shall forgive him," but always by *וְנָסַח לוֹ*, "and he shall be forgiven." The passive indicates that God was considered the author of forgiveness.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Theologie . . ., III, 119f.

2. So Welch, Prophet and Priest . . ., pp. 102, 136, 140; Jacob, Theology . . ., pp. 268, 294, 297; Vriezen, An Outline of . . ., p. 281, writes "all in italics Israel's God does not demand a cult from which He could reap benefit, but on the contrary He gives His people a cult that enables them to maintain communion with Him by means of the atonement (Lev. 17.11)." Koehler, Old Testament . . ., p. 181, however, calls the cult man's expedient for his own redemption: ". . . it is begun and continued and accomplished by man; it is works, not grace; an act of self help, not a piece of God's salvation."

3. So Stamm, Erlösen und Vergeben . . ., p. 29.

The extent of the forgiveness assured by the cult was theoretically limited to sins committed "unwittingly" (RSV) or "through ignorance" (AV).<sup>1</sup> This limitation was probably caused by earlier prophetic criticism of the misuse of the expiatory sacrifices.<sup>2</sup> In any event, it is found to qualify almost every expiation and resultant forgiveness.<sup>3</sup> Those who sin intentionally "with a high hand,"<sup>4</sup> were to be cut off from the people and left to the uncovenanted mercy of God (Num. 15.30). It is not certain, however, that this theory was strictly maintained. There are some passages which suggest that the efficacy of the expiatory sacrifices was extended to include some intentional sins.<sup>5</sup>

"The climax of the atoning sacrifices, and the key-stone of the whole sacrificial system, was the Day of Atonement."<sup>6</sup> This was the annual great day of confession of sin,

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1. Heb. נִשְׁכָּח; see G. E. Wright, "The Faith of Israel," Inter. Bible. I, 385.
  2. So Eichrodt, Theologie . . ., III, 120.
  3. Lev. 4.2,13,22,27; 5.15,18; Num. 15.24,25 (twice), 26f., 28f.
  4. Num. 15.30 (Heb. בְּיָד חֲזָקָה).
  5. See Lev. 5.1,5,10,20-26 In the EVV 6.1-77; 19.20-22. On the point see Rowley, The Meaning of Sacrifice . . ., pp. 96f.
  6. So S. R. Driver and H. A. White, "Day of Atonement," HDB, I, 201a; Gray, Sacrifices . . ., p. 321.



expiation and forgiveness.<sup>1</sup> As the day is described in Leviticus 16, it is a very late development,<sup>2</sup> but it is probable that some of its component parts (e.g. the scapegoat ritual) had an ancient origin and an early use in Israel. It is significant that the rites of the day were said to make expiation and cleansing for all the sins of the people (vss. 16, 30, 34). Certainly the high priest's confession over the head of the live goat (vs. 21) employed the strongest terms for sin:  $\text{לְכָל־עֲוֹנוֹתֵינוּ}$  . Later Judaism interpreted this to include both the intentional and unwitting sins, but it is not clear whether it was this inclusive from the beginning.<sup>3</sup>

The expiatory sacrifices and the resultant assurance of forgiveness involved two dangers. First, there was always the danger that the people would tend to attribute magical efficacy to them. But, as H. H. Rowley writes, "that is not the real teaching of the Old Testament, where it is clearly taught that sacrifices must be the organ of the spirit of the offerer, if they were to be effective. Where the sacrifice was offered for sin, the Law no less than the prophets asked

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1. So Gray, Sacrifices . . . , pp. 306ff.

2. Ibid., pp. 315ff.; C. R. North, "Sacrifice," ThWBB, pp. 206-14.

3. Ibid., pp. 317f.; Driver and White, HDB, I, 201, footnote.



for something more than the outward act. The Law required the confession of sin and humble penitence of spirit, without which the sacrifice could achieve nothing. It also required restitution, where the sin was against another and where restitution could be made" (cf. Lev. 5.5f.; Num. 5.6f.).<sup>1</sup>

The second danger was a subtle one. It arose in post-exilic times when there was a growing emphasis on the expiatory sacrifices and an increasing number of them. As W. Eichrodt puts it<sup>2</sup> a piling up of ritual indicates a dangerous tendency that God's promise of forgiveness was no longer sufficient--more guarantees were needed. The intended idea that these expiations were signs and pledges of God's grace, i.e. sacraments, tended to be obscured. The distorted idea grew that they were a performance of obedience--pious acts of men which claimed God's acknowledgment.<sup>3</sup>

Summary: It may be said that the cultic regulations, as we have them in their relatively late form, bear further testimony to the concept of divine forgiveness in the Old

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1. The Meaning of Sacrifice . . ., p. 87; cf. also The Faith . . ., p. 95; Eichrodt, Theologie . . ., III, 120; C. R. North, The Thought of the Old Testament (London: The Epworth Press, 1948), pp. 46ff.; N. H. Snaith, "Forgiveness," ThWBB, pp. 85f.
  2. Theologie, III, 128f.
  3. Ibid., III, 129.

Testament. The cult served as a continual reminder both of the judgment of God (for sin had to be expiated) and of the grace of God to a sinful people (for after expiation there was assurance of pardon). Though the requirement of repentance and obedience does not always expressly accompany the regulations for sacrifice, they were presupposed by the priestly writers.

The cult always involved the danger of being liable to engender a mechanical and unethical view of sin and forgiveness and a false sense of security, but in its ideal form the system embodied a notable conception of God's grace to sinners.

#### The Psalms

The psalms bear frequent testimony to God's forgiveness. The idea generally appears in two kinds of passages. First, there are prayers requesting the forgiveness of sins (25.7,11,18; 39.9; 41.5; 51.3,4,9,11; 79.9; 109.14; <sup>1</sup> 143.2). Secondly, there are declarations of faith that God has forgiven or does forgive <sup>2</sup> (32.1,2; 65.4; 78.38; 85.3; 86.5; 99.8; 103.3,12; 107.20; 130.4). In these passages the usual words for pardon, נָשָׁח, נָשַׁח, נָשַׁח, continue to appear, but

1. This one requests that the sins of enemies may not be forgiven.
2. The declaration may occur in a prayer, a hymn of praise, or a beatitude.

the various metaphors appear more frequently than was the case previously. As opposed to the priestly writings the necessity of a cultic expiatory sacrifice is not mentioned in the penitential psalms.<sup>1</sup> It may be assumed by some of the others,<sup>2</sup> but even in these the emphasis is on the fact of God's pardon and not on the means employed.

Unlike the priestly writings, God's forgiveness is apparently never limited to the "unwitting sins"; rather it is almost always pardon of  $\text{נָסַח}$ ,  $\text{נָסַח}$ ,  $\text{נָסַח}$ --terms for sins wilfully committed.

In the Psalms, forgiveness means the removal of guilt--the barriers and separation which sin causes between God and the people or God and the individual.<sup>3</sup> Since it was the general thought in the Psalms, as elsewhere, that punishment is a consequence of sin, forgiveness is almost always thought to be accompanied by some degree of relief from the punishment.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, restoration from the exile or relief

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1. So Stamm, Erloesen und Vergeben . . . , p. 134.

2. E.g., 65.4; 78.38; 79.9. In all these the verb for "forgive" is a form of .

3. So Stamm, Erloesen und Vergeben . . . , p. 131.

4. See 39.9ff; 78.38; 79.9; 85.3; and especially where the verb  $\text{נָסַח}$  occurs, 41.5; 103.3; 107.20.

from personal distresses were often considered the proof that God had forgiven.<sup>1</sup>

However, this usual connection sometimes fades into the background, leaving only the spiritual forgiveness prominent. In Psalm 32 the petitioner attributes his bodily sickness to his previous refusal to confess his sin. When, finally, he does confess, he is blessed, and the blessing which he repeatedly mentions is that of the forgiveness of his sins (vss. 1,2,5). In Psalms 51 and 130 this is yet more clearly evident. Though physical distresses may be in the dim background, sin and iniquity are the main causes of anguish which need wiping away.<sup>2</sup>

The presuppositions of forgiveness in these psalms are the acknowledgement and confession of sin accompanied by a real desire for obedience (cf. 25.4-11; 32.5; 51.5f.). The petitioners recognize that

If thou, O Lord, shouldst mark iniquities,  
 Lord, who could stand?  
 But there is forgiveness (Heb.  $\text{נְּחֻמָּה}$ ; LXX.  $\epsilon\lambda\alpha\sigma\mu\acute{o}\varsigma$ ) with thee,  
 that thou mayest be feared.  
 130.3f.

The psalmists refer to various grounds of God's forgiving grace. The most frequent is God's covenanting and

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1. See 85.2f.; Is. 38.17. This is pointed out by A. F. Kirkpatrick, The Book of Psalms (Cambridge: The University Press, 1902), pp. 510, 601, passim.
  2. So Stamm, Erloesen und Vergeben . . . , p. 132; Herder, Suehne und Vergebung . . . , pp. 96ff.



steadfast love, that is, his  $\text{רַחֲמָנִים}$ .<sup>1</sup> This is an important word; it indicates that it was God's faithful and sustaining hand in their rebellious history that gave assurance of forgiveness. Sometimes God is said to forgive for the sake of his name ( $\text{שְׁמִי}$ ); that is, he has a forgiving nature.<sup>2</sup> On other occasions he is appealed to or thought to forgive on the basis of his goodness ( $\text{רַחֲמָנִים}$ ),<sup>3</sup> or compassion ( $\text{רַחֲמָנִים רַחֲמֵיךָ}$ ),<sup>4</sup> or faithfulness ( $\text{אֱמֻנָה}$ ).<sup>5</sup> Sometimes he is even asked to forgive in consideration for the weakness and ephemeral nature of man.<sup>6</sup>

Summary: Forgiveness in the Psalms is God's complete obliteration of the separating effects of man's offenses or the complete removal of the spiritual barrier which they raise between man and God. This presupposes a confession of guilt and repentance and is generally accompanied by a miti-

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1. See N. H. Snaith, The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament (London, The Epworth Press, 1944), Chapter 5.

2. Ps. 25.11; 79.9; cf. 109.21; 143.11.

3. Ps. 25.7.

4. Ps. 51.3; cf. 78.38.

5. Ps. 86.15; cf. also 25.10; 143.1.

6. Ps. 25.18f.; 39.2-12; 78.39; 103.14.

gation or removal of physical distress of some kind. The material or physical relief sometimes fades into the background leaving the forgiving of the offense as the prominent matter. Divine forgiveness assured through the ministry of the cult receives only slight attention in the Psalms. In the place of this cultic assurance the psalmists rest on historical assurance. God's gracious dealing with the nation through its history (redemption from Egypt, covenant, etc.) give promise that he is a forgiving God.

#### The Rest of the Old Testament

Both the specific terms and the idea of forgiveness appear infrequently in other books of the Old Testament.<sup>1</sup> They are extensions of the main ideas already treated and need not be reviewed here.

#### Summary

1. Yahweh is considered one who completely forgives sins yet punishes the guilty. This dual activity need not be inconsistent, since the Hebrew concept of sin includes the offense itself, the guilt, the punishment and the mysterious (demonic) force involved.

2. Yahweh's forgiveness deals with part of the meaning of sin and part of its results. The offenses themselves cannot

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1. See Herner, Suehne und Vergebung . . . , pp. 109ff.

be erased; much of the physical results and punishment are not recalled; and the mysterious force of evil is not dealt with under the concept of forgiveness (unless its remedy be expected in the eschatological hope). However, the focal point in the meaning and results of sin is dealt with by forgiveness. Forgiveness removes (cleanses, expiates, covers, cast into the sea, blots out, forgets, etc.) guilt, the state of being in the wrong with God. Positively put, Yahweh's forgiveness acts for the healing of the relationship which sin has broken. The idea of forgiveness is constitutive to and inherent in the very personal return of the (justly) wrathful God to the worshippers.<sup>1</sup>

3. Divine forgiveness is almost always thought to be accompanied and ratified by the mitigation or removal of external distresses. One may well conclude with W. H. Bennett: "The assurance of pardon is chiefly found in deliverance."<sup>2</sup> However, this must not be taken to mean that forgiveness re-

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1. So Eichrodt, Theologie . . ., III, 118. He writes that there are residual remains of pre-covenant ideas of forgiveness (i.e. mechanical-material remedies for offenses against an impersonal numinous power), but the one stated above is predominant.
  2. The Religion of . . ., p. 329. Stamm, Erloesen und Vergeben . . ., pp. 145-47, defends the thesis that these two concepts belong together throughout the Old Testament. He concludes that forgiveness is not known apart from external restoration (redemption) and that the latter can be viewed as a sign of the former. So also Procksch, Theologie . . ., p. 668.

moved all the effects of sin,<sup>1</sup> nor, indeed, as has been occasionally noted, was forgiveness always ratified by material blessings. In various passages there is thanksgiving (petition or hope) for forgiveness alone; material blessings, if present at all, are in the dim background (e.g., Is. 53).

4. There are several ways in which the sinful nation or individuals sought and received God's forgiveness: ordinarily it was through the prayers of an intercessor or through one's own prayer and through the various rites and expressions of the cult. There is also the extraordinary suggestion that forgiveness might come through the suffering and death of the servant of God when that suffering is acknowledged by sinners to be for their sakes and in their stead.

5. In all of these ways there is the underlying assumption that the petitioners and recipients have sincerely desired to turn from their rebelliousness and return in obedience to the will of God.<sup>2</sup> A few notable passages stress that God's forgiveness has already been granted and on the basis of it exhort the nation to return to him. But whether man's

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1. So T. H. Robinson, The Old Testament and Modern Study . . ., p. 354; Rowley, The Faith . . ., p. 97.
  2. See the good summary on the meaning of repentance by Eichrodt, Theologie . . ., III, 131-136.



turning to God precedes or follows forgiveness, it is always seen to accompany it.

6. The motivation behind God's desire to forgive is variously stated. His steadfast covenant loyalty, his own name, honor (or nature), his love, his sympathy for the frailty of man are mentioned. Though there may be isolated incidents or residual ideas which witness to the contrary, God's motivation is predominantly represented as being ethical and free--not subject to being influenced by sacrifices or mechanical manipulations.

7. The scope of forgiveness is generally limited to the people of Israel. This is understandable; according to Israelite interpretation it was to them that God revealed his nature and commandments, and it was with them that he originally dealt. However, there are voices which rise above this general limitation. These recognized that Israel had a mission to the Gentiles; they proclaimed God's commands to other nations and his desire to forgive all who turned to him.<sup>1</sup>

8. In the Old Testament concept of divine forgiveness there is also a forward look. G. Ernest Wright states it well:

. . . there is a forgiveness which God will grant at the end of the present era in the eschatological

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1. See H. H. Rowley, The Missionary Message of the Old Testament (London: The Carey Kingsgate Press, 1944).

time when the conflicts of the present will be resolved. In this case the forgiveness is a free and unmerited act of God, independent of human repentance. Man will be given a 'new heart' so that his rebellion will cease, and God will forgive the sins of the past . . . . These passages portray the restitution of God's people as a sacred community in fellowship with himself. Forgiveness is both an integral part and a consequence of this future redemption.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Inter. Bible, I, 386. So also E. F. Scott, The Kingdom and the Messiah (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1911), p. 151.

## CHAPTER II

### DIVINE FORGIVENESS IN LATER JUDAISM

#### The Jewish Idea of Sin

The later Jewish idea of sin, as Staehlin and Grundmann indicate,<sup>1</sup> was determined by the Law. Ideally, the Law (the written law plus its oral definition and interpretation) included the whole revelation of the will of God and, indeed, was closely identified with God himself.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, the Old Testament and the Jewish ideas of sin correspond very closely. Both hold that the constitutive element in sin is the offense against God.<sup>3</sup>

What constitutes such an offense against God? The Law is the criterion. As G. F. Moore puts it,<sup>4</sup> any want of

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1. Quell et al., Sin, p. 39.

2. See W. O. E. Oesterley, "Judaism in the Days of Christ," The Parting of the Roads, ed. F. J. Foakes Jackson (London: E. Arnold, 1912), pp. 87ff.

3. So A. Buechler, "Ben Sira's Conception of Sin and Atonement," JQR, XIV (1923/24), pp. 78ff.; G. F. Moore, Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era, the Age of Tannaim (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1927), I, 460-96; Quell et al., Sin, pp. 39-45.

4. Judaism . . ., I, 460.

conformity to it or transgression of it was sin.<sup>1</sup> The multiplicity of the separate rules (due to scribal definitions) inevitably placed a heavy stress on the external correctness of men's action. Since God's commands were delineated in minute legal requirements, there were unfortunate possibilities which Emil Schuerer<sup>2</sup> rightly notes. It was only natural that obedience to the letter of the law would tend to become more important than obedience to the spirit. It is important to recognize that for later Judaism sin was avoidable, if one sincerely wished to avoid it (Sir. 15.15). Man has the two latent possibilities--to move toward evil or toward good. He has impulses in both directions and is perfectly capable of choosing between them.<sup>3</sup> Generally speaking, however, all men were considered to be sinners,<sup>4</sup> and the consequences of such sin were thought to be the same serious ones which are pictured in the Old Testament.<sup>5</sup>

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1. C. H. Dodd, The Bible and the Greeks (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1935), Chapter 4, demonstrates that this legalistic tendency is quite apparent in the LXX's translations of the Hebrew words for sin.
  2. "Life Under the Law," A History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ, Div. I, trans. J. Macpherson (New York: Charles Scribners, 1896), Vol. II, 90-125.
  3. See Jakob Jocz, The Jewish People and Jesus Christ (London: S.P.C.K., 1949), pp. 275f.
  4. Sometimes Abraham, Moses, and Elijah are excepted. See Quell et al, Sin, p. 42.
  5. So Moore, Judaism . . ., I, 469ff.



Divine Forgiveness in the Apocrypha  
and Pseudepigrapha

The Fact of Forgiveness

The Jewish literature known as the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha dates from the second century B. C. into the first century A. D. In these writings God's forgiving mercy to penitent sinners is not lost from view. Generally speaking, it is an assumption of most of the writers,<sup>1</sup> and it may be observed in four kinds of passages.

First, there are passages which explicitly affirm faith in divine grace for sinners.<sup>2</sup>

Therefore the Lord is patient with them  
and pours out his mercy upon them.  
He sees and recognizes that their end will be evil;  
therefore he grants them forgiveness in abundance.  
The compassion of man is for his neighbor,  
but the compassion of the Lord is for all living beings  
.....  
He has compassion on those who accept his discipline  
and who are eager for his judgments.  
Sir. 18.11-13a, 14.

Other such affirmations occur in Sir. 16.11; 17.29; Wisdom of Sol. 11.23; II Esdras 7.62 (132)-70 (140); cf. also Baruch 2.35; 4.5-5.9; II Esdras 8.26-36.

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1. So H. J. Wicks, The Doctrine of God in the Jewish Apocryphal and Apocalyptic Literature (London: Hunter & Longhurst, 1915), p. 287.
  2. The English translations are taken from The Apocrypha, The Revised Standard Version of the Old Testament (New York: Thos. Nelson and Sons, 1957).

Secondly, there are prayers for God's mercy which assume that he forgives the penitent.<sup>1</sup> The Prayer of Manasseh is the best example. The climax of the prayer is reached in the 13th verse:

I earnestly beseech thee,  
 forgive, me, O Lord, forgive me!  
 Do not destroy me with my transgressions!  
 Do not be angry with me for ever  
 or lay up evil for me;  
 . . . . .  
 For thou, O Lord, art the God of those who repent,  
 . . . . .

In the third place, the acceptance of the sacrificial system implies a faith in God's desire to forgive. W. O. E. Gesterley<sup>2</sup> points out that this system was generally taken for granted by the Apocryphal writers (e.g., II Macc. 12.43-45).

Finally, we may observe that when the writers speak of or call for repentance, they assume that God forgives the one who is penitent (e.g., Sir. 17.25ff.).

It has been correctly observed that the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha give the impression that the attitude of

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1. So N. B. Johnson, Prayer in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha: A Study of the Jewish Concept of God ("Journal of Biblical Literature Monograph Series, Vol. II; Philadelphia: Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis, 1948), pp. 54, 61.
  2. An Introduction to the Books of the Apocrypha (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1935), p. 85. So also Thos. Walker, Hebrew Religion Between the Testaments: An Exposition of the Judaism of the Home of Jesus (London: Jas. Clarke & Co., 1937), Chapter 5.

God toward sinners is somewhat passive. C. Ryder Smith concludes:

In the Apocalyptic and Rabbinical literature it appears to be true that God rather waits to forgive than is eager to forgive . . . . Plea for repentance [In the Old Testament] has given way to a mere willingness to forgive.<sup>1</sup>

### The Conditions or Ways of Obtaining Forgiveness

God is conveyed as being forgiving to sinners on the basis of a variety of influences. "The great majority of these writers who teach the doctrine of the forgiving God either assert or distinctly imply that repentance on the part of the sinner is a sine qua non."<sup>2</sup> Sometimes the forgiveness of one's offenders is said to be a condition of divine forgiveness.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to these there was a persistent and wide spread idea among these writers that God was inclined to be forgiving to sinners on account of other considerations. We

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1. The Bible Doctrine of Sin . . . ., pp. 105f. So also Wicks, The Doctrine of God . . . ., pp. 289, 343.
  2. Wicks, The Doctrine of God . . . ., 340. So also Johnson, Prayer in the Apocrypha . . . ., pp. 54, 72; Buechler, JQR, XIV, 83.
  3. See the good discussion on this point by R. H. Charles, The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913), II, 293. See also his Religious Development Between the Old and New Testaments (London: Williams and Norgate, 1914), Chapter 5. The passages usually cited are Test. of Gad, 6.3-7 and Test. of Zeb. 8.1-3.



may list the following groups:<sup>1</sup> (1) God regards intercessions offered on behalf of sinners or the merits of the righteous. Especially notable are the meritorious deaths of the martyrs. These are declared to have expiatory value for the sins of Israel.<sup>2</sup> (2) God has regard to sacrifices offered by men on their own behalf, or to their penance, or to their righteous deeds. (3) There is also the doctrine that sin is cancelled by the sufferings which God inflicts in this life or in the future unseen world.

1. See Wicks, The Doctrine of God . . ., pp. 337ff. See also E. B. Redlich, The Forgiveness of Sins (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1937), pp. 85ff. for a convenient list of citations.
2. The relevant passages (from Charles, The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha . . .) are as follows: In II Macc. 7.37f. the youngest of the martyr-brothers defiantly shouts to the king,  
 "I, like my brothers, give up body and soul for our father's laws, calling on God to show favor to our nation soon and to make thee acknowledge . . . that he alone is God, and to let the Almighty's wrath, justly fallen on the whole of our nation end in me and my brothers."  
 In IV Macc. 6.28 while Eleazar is in the process of being martyred, he prays:  
 "Thou, O God . . . Be merciful unto thy people, and let our punishment be a satisfaction in their behalf. Make my blood their purification, and take my soul to ransom their souls."  
 Finally, in IV Macc. 17.21-22 it is written that on account of the death of these martyrs,  
 ". . . our country was purified, they having as it were become a ransom (ὡς ἅντιψυχὸν γεγονότος) for our nation's sin; and through the blood of these righteous men and the propitiation of their death, the divine Providence delivered Israel that before was evil entreated."



In regard to the final judgment H. J. Wicks writes:

. . . the great majority of those who treat of eschatology teach that the ultimate fate of men turns on their own righteousness or unrighteousness, but they did not conceive of a judgment untempered by mercy.<sup>1</sup>

This idea of judgment on the basis of worth became harsher in the literature of the first century, A. D.

#### The Forgiveness of God to the Gentiles

In this literature a more nationalistic outlook is evident. Though no work in the second century, B. C. (except, perhaps, Jubilees), teaches the exclusion of the Gentiles from God's mercy, this idea is frequent by the first century, A. D. Yet always the wider vision had its advocates.<sup>2</sup>

#### Forgiveness and the Messianic Hopes

One of the concomitants of the growing Messianic hopes found in the Pseudepigrapha must be mentioned. There was among many Jews the expectation that in the eschatological age, the Messianic kingdom, sin and evil would be removed and that men would be bothered by it no more (I En. 5.6-9; Test. Lev. 18.9f.; II Bar. 73.1-4; Ps. Sol. 17.23-41). This putting an end to sin was definitely a function of the Messiah(s), but there was

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1. The Doctrine of God . . ., p. 340.

2. Ibid., pp. 341f.

little speculation as to how this would be accomplished.

Although in I En. 5.6 there is perhaps the promise of forgiveness in the age to come, the Messiah was never considered to have personal authority to forgive sins<sup>1</sup> or to remove them by his own suffering and death.<sup>2</sup>

### Divine Forgiveness in Rabbinic Literature

It is important to remember that the Rabbis tended to view sin as the misuse of one's free will. One could avoid sin if one he really wanted to obey the Torah. Consequently, the emphasis in Rabbinic theology is on the necessity of obedience to the law rather than on forgiveness. W.O.E. Oesterley states that "the doctrine of Divine grace played a relatively unimportant part in Judaism."<sup>3</sup> Montefiore and Loewe point out more guardedly that in the eyes of the Rabbis "there was a certain fear that the loving kindness of God might be stressed so greatly that it might be misinterpreted, and even tempt lower natures to wrongdoing."<sup>4</sup> However, it must be

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1. So Strack-Bill., I, 495; S. Mowinckel, He That Cometh (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1956), p. 318.

2. So Joseph Klausner, The Messianic Idea in Israel: From its Beginning to the Completion of the Mishnah, trans. W. F. Stinespring (3d ed.; New York: The Macmillan Co., 1949), p. 530.

3. The Parting . . ., p. 94.

4. C. G. Montefiore and H. Loewe (ed.), A Rabbinic Anthology (London: Macmillan & Co., 1938), p. 315.

quickly added that in Rabbinic theology it was assumed that God would and did forgive sins. In the New Testament this is implied in the question of the Pharisees in Mk. 2.7: "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" A classic statement is found in the Sixth Benediction in the old synagogue service:

Forgive us, O our Father, for we have sinned; pardon us, O our King, for we have transgressed; for thou dost pardon and forgive. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who art gracious, and dost abundantly forgive.<sup>1</sup>

Other examples might be given. One need only refer to the Mishnah tractate dealing with the Day of Atonement (Yoma),<sup>2</sup> to the repeated uses in Rabbinic literature of Ps. 31.1f. which Strack and Billerbeck have collected,<sup>3</sup> and to the repeated statement that the kindness of God exceeds his severity.<sup>4</sup>

Perhaps the most frequent references to forgiveness are those implied in the multitude of passages about repentance.<sup>5</sup>

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1. The translation is taken from C. K. Barrett, The New Testament Background: Selected Documents (New York: Macmillan & Co., 1957), p. 162.
  2. On the use of expiatory sacrifices in Later Judaism see the summary by F. Buechsel, "ἡμέρα," KThWNT, III, 313f.
  3. III, 202f.
  4. See Strack-Bill., I, 444; III, 230; and the citations given by Gottfried Quell and Gottlob Schrenk, Righteousness, trans. and ed. J. R. Coates ("Bible Key Words from Gerhard Kittel's Theologisches Woerterbuch zum Neuen Testament; London: Adam and Charles Black, 1951), p. 34, note 2.
  5. See S. Schechter, Some Aspects of Rabbinic Theology (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1909), p. 327; K. Kohler, "Repentance," Jew. Ency., X, 376ff.; I. Abrahams, Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels (First Series; Cambridge: University Press, 1917), p. 143.



"The general Rabbinic view," writes C. G. Montefiore, "was that no sinner, however great, except perhaps the apostate, the heretic, or the informer, would, if he repented, be shut out from the divine forgiveness . . . . No time is too early or too late for repentance. It is God's chosen method of dealing with the sinner . . . ." <sup>1</sup>

Repentance and the correlative idea of God's forgiveness of the penitent, says G. F. Moore, may "properly be called the Jewish doctrine of salvation." <sup>2</sup> Indeed, the importance of the concept of repentance among the Rabbis can hardly be over estimated. Illustrative of this are the passages which say that repentance was created before the world itself--second in creation only to the Law. <sup>3</sup> After the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D., this emphasis is even more apparent. <sup>4</sup>

The requirements for repentance were thorough. G. F. Moore explains that "the transparent primary sense of repentance in Judaism is always a change in man's attitude toward God and in the conduct of life, a religious and moral reformation of the people or the individual." <sup>5</sup> The Rabbis were insistent that re-

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1. "The Spirit of Judaism," The Beginnings of Christianity Part One: The Acts of the Apostles, ed. F. J. Foakes-Jackson and Kirsopp Lake (London: Macmillan and Co., 1920), I, 53.
  2. Judaism . . ., I, p. 500. So also A. Cohen, Everyman's Talmud (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1932), pp. 110ff.
  3. So Moore, Judaism . . ., I, 526ff.
  4. So Cohen, Everyman's . . ., p. 111; C. G. Montefiore, JQR, XVI (Jan. 1904), 209-57.
  5. Judaism . . ., I, 507; so also Schechter, Some Aspects . . ., p. 335.



pentance be sincere; indeed, they discussed in meticulous detail what constituted that sincerity.<sup>1</sup>

How was repentance related to God's forgiveness? The Rabbis insist that God forgives; however, at the same time they repeatedly emphasize their optimism about man's ability to return to God and spurn the evil impulse if he wishes.<sup>2</sup> Repentance becomes an "eternal principle of self-amendment"<sup>3</sup> or a means of achieving forgiveness.<sup>4</sup> The Jew might wish rather to say that repentance makes one worthy to receive God's crowning gift of forgiveness.<sup>5</sup> It is true to say that in Rabbinic Judaism man takes the first steps toward forgiveness and reconciliation.<sup>6</sup> He purges himself by repentance and other means; God responds with forgiveness.<sup>7</sup>

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1. See Yoma 86b and 87a; Cohen, Everyman's . . ., p. 115.
  2. So Kaufmann Kohler, Jewish Theology Systematically and Historically Considered (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1918), pp. 250ff.
  3. T. F. Torrance, The Doctrine of Grace in the Apostolic Fathers (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1948), p. 135.
  4. Alfred Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus The Messiah (8th. ed.; London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1896), I, p. 509, points out that "when more closely examined, we find that this repentance, as preceding the free welcome of invitation to the sinner, was only another form of workrighteousness."
  5. See particularly Morris Joseph, "Salvation (Jewish)," ERE, XI, 138.
  6. See W.O.E. Oesterley and G. H. Box, The Religion and Worship of the Synagogue (London: Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons, Ltd., 1911), p. 278; also Jocz, The Jewish People . . ., pp. 273f.
  7. See Schechter, Some Aspects . . ., p. 294; A. Buechler, Studies in Sin and Atonement in the Rabbinic Literature of the First Century (London: Oxford University Press, 1928), p. 450; Cohen, Everyman's . . ., p. 115.

A real limitation of the doctrine of repentance is notable here, as Gottlob Schrenk has pointed out.<sup>1</sup> Since forgiveness depended on the genuineness of one's repentance, a sinner and others who knew the sinner would always be uncertain whether God had forgiven him or not. This opens the way for the censoriousness which is familiar in the Pharisaism of the New Testament times.

Though repentance was the first and fundamental condition of forgiveness, there were other means of obtaining it in later Judaism which were concurrent or additional. This may be illustrated by the scale set up by Rabbi Ishmael:<sup>2</sup>

- (a) Penitence atones for the breaking of a commandment.
- (b) Penitence and the Day of Atonement atone for the violation of a prohibition.
- (c) Penitence, the Day of Atonement and suffering atone for crimes worthy of death.
- (d) Penitence, the Day of Atonement, suffering and death atone for profanation of the name of God.

Yet even these four do not exhaust the ways of obtaining forgiveness.<sup>3</sup>

Was forgiveness available to penitent Gentiles? The answer is not uniform. "Two things were sure to the Rabbis,"

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1. Righteousness, p. 34.

2. Tos. Yom ha-Kippurim 5,6-8. Cited by Moore, Judaism . . ., I, 546.

3. See the discussion by Schechter, Some Aspects . . ., pp. 301ff.; Moore, Judaism . . ., I, 497ff. and 546ff.

writes C. G. Montefiore, "God is good to all, and yet almost all non-Israelites are idolaters and therefore sinners, oppressors, actual and potential, of Israel, and therefore enemies of God."<sup>1</sup> Some Rabbis were intolerant of Gentiles and others felt that God desired the repentance of all nations and would be merciful to their righteous ones also.<sup>2</sup> There must have been many in this latter category, since in Jesus' day many proselytes were sought and received into Judaism (Matt. 23.15).<sup>3</sup> Montefiore concludes, however, that the "Rabbinic doctrine is, on the whole, particularistic, while the modern teaching is pronouncedly universalistic."<sup>4</sup>

#### Divine Forgiveness in the Dead Sea Scrolls

Of great importance for New Testament studies are the recent (1947-56) discoveries in the area of the Wady Qumran on the northwest corner of the Dead Sea. These have shed light on another kind of pre-Christian Judaism which differs markedly from that just noted. Much has been written about these discoveries.<sup>5</sup>

1. The Beginnings . . ., I, 40.
2. Ibid., pp. 40ff.; Moore, Judaism . . ., I, 528f.
3. On the Jewish mission to the heathen in Jesus' day see O. Cullmann, Baptism in the New Testament, trans. J.K.S. Reid (London: SCM Press, 1950), pp. 60ff.; Moore, Judaism . . ., I, 323-53.
4. Quoted by Oesterly and Box, The Religion and Worship . . ., p. 272. See Moore, Judaism . . ., I, 528f.
5. See, for example, H. H. Rowley, The Zadokite Fragments and The Dead Sea Scrolls (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1952); Millar Burrows, The Dead Sea Scrolls (New York: The Viking



The concerted effort of an international group of scholars in collecting and collating all the scroll fragments has been frequently described. The community which produced the scrolls has been almost definitely identified as that of the Essenes.<sup>1</sup> And much has been written in an attempt to ascertain the historical significance of the sect.

In the matter of their concept of sin and forgiveness the Essenes closely correspond to the early Rabbis. In general, one might say that due to their apocalyptic eschatology the Essenes simply intensified the ordinary Jewish ideas.

As in the Old Testament and later Jewish thought, sin was considered a theological concept; it was disobedience to the Torah, i.e. the will of God. J. P. Hyatt<sup>2</sup> observes that the Essenes employed the idea of the two spirits (of truth and perversity) struggling for men (1 QS iv. 23f.). However, rather than sin being the misuse of free will in choosing between these two, as with the Rabbis, the Essenes were more pessimistic about man's inherited nature and more deterministic as to which spirit would rule over men. Hyatt writes that "the dominant point of

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Press, 1955); E. L. Sukenik, The Dead Sea Scrolls of the Hebrew University (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1955); J. M. Allegro, The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Origins of Christianity (New York: Criterion Books, 1957).

1. So F. M. Cross, Jr., The Ancient Library of Qumran and Modern Biblical Studies (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1958), Chapters II and III.
2. "The View of Man in the Qumran 'Hodayot,'" NTS, II (1955/56), 280.



view (cf. 1QS iii.13-lv.26) is that every man has his own 'lot' or 'destiny' ( 3772) to be enrolled either among the sons of light (or truth, or righteousness) or among the sons of darkness (or iniquity), and he cannot escape his appointed destiny."<sup>1</sup> To the Essenes that destiny was not expected to be far off; they looked for an early end of the age--God's final victorious battle. When that came the lot of the wicked would be utter destruction.<sup>2</sup>

Even though they still experienced the inner struggle with Belial (the Angel of Darkness) the sons of light were those who had received the forgiveness of God. They were identified with the elect--all those who had withdrawn from froward men and impure society into the communal, obedient life of the desert sect. Thus, the means of obtaining forgiveness was to become an Essene and maintain an obedient participation in their community until the End. This involved both God's electing and predestining grace and a thorough repentance. God's grace was thought to have called them into the covenant community and to have continually cleansed them.<sup>3</sup> Several passages could be cited, but the following will suffice to show how much they attributed to it.

In his mercy he has brought me near,  
And in his steadfast love he will bring my vindication.

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1. Ibid.; so also J. Licht, "The Doctrine of the Thanksgiving Scroll," IEJ, VI (1956), 5.
  2. Ibid., p. 282; so also Herbert Braun, "'Umkehr' in spaet-juedisch-haeretischer und in fruehchristlicher Sicht," ZThK, Vol. 50 (1953), 246.
  3. So Millar Burrows, More Light on the Dead Sea Scrolls (New York: The Viking Press, 1958), p. 292.



ix.3-6). Here again is perhaps found the idea of a vicarious atonement. Some have held that the community deliberately sought to fulfill the prophecy of Is. 53,<sup>1</sup> but this is much disputed. The tendency of the Manual of Discipline indicates that this is an atonement by ritual obedience to God in withdrawing from sinners and not an atonement by a personal obedience to God in suffering love for sinners.

The rites of the Essenes also point to their faith in God's mercy to them. It is not clear whether the Essenes carried on the sacrificial cultus apart from the Temple.<sup>2</sup> However, most agree that the community approved of the system<sup>3</sup> and looked forward to the day when God would remove the defiled priests of Jerusalem and restore it to them--the true priests.<sup>4</sup> We may suppose that this cultus, as in the Old Testament and other later Jewish thought, was considered a divinely instituted means of grace whereby sin

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1. See C. T. Fritsch, The Qumran Community: Its History and Its Scrolls (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1956), pp. 120ff.; F. F. Bruce, Second Thoughts on the Dead Sea Scrolls (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1956), p. 103; Wm. H. Brownlee, "The Servant of the Lord in the Qumran Scrolls I," BASOR, No. 132 (Dec. 1953), 8ff.; No. 135 (Oct. 1954), 33ff.
  2. J. M. Baumgarten, "Sacrifice and Worship Among the Jewish Sectarians of the Dead Sea (Qumran) Scrolls," HTR, XLVI (1953), 141-57, suggests that they did not have a sacrificial cultus at Qumran. Cross, The Ancient Library . . ., pp. 74ff., suggests that they probably did, but holds that it is not certain.
  3. D. Barthelémy and J. T. Milik, Jordan Department of Antiquities, Ecole Biblique et Archeologique Francaise, Palestine Archaeological Museum: Discoveries in the Judean Desert-I: Qumran Cave I, with contributions by R. DeVaux, H. J. Plenderleith, G. M. Crowfoot, and G. L. Harding (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1955), p. 153, write: ". . . La doctrine et la pratique de l'expiation jouaient un grand role dans la theologie et dans la liturgie des sectaires de Qumran."
  4. See Cross, The Ancient Library . . ., pp. 74ff.



might be forgiven and God's covenant with penitent sinners might be restored.

The lustrations by water which are mentioned in the Scrolls (e.g., 1 QS iii.3-9) probably had the sacramental function of mediating or symbolizing divine forgiveness.<sup>1</sup> It is made quite clear that they had no magical significance; their efficacy was totally dependent upon the recipient having a cleansed moral life. W. H. Brownlee,<sup>2</sup> J. A. T. Robinson<sup>3</sup> and others point out that this idea is important background for the understanding of the rite of John the Baptist. They hold that the Baptist may have been directly associated with the Essenes at one time and, thus, have been influenced by them.

The communal meal may also have had some sacramental significance in the sense of symbolizing the gift of forgiveness or salvation, but it is not certain.<sup>4</sup> That it was a "liturgical anticipation of the Messianic banquet"<sup>5</sup> seems more probable. If

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1. With K. G. Kuhn, "The Lord's Supper and the Communal Meal at Qumran," The Scrolls and the New Testament; ed. K. Stendahl (New York: Harper, 1957), p. 68; and W. H. Brownlee, "John the Baptist in the New Light of Ancient Scrolls," Inter., Vol. 9 (1955), 78.
  2. Inter., Vol. 9, 78.
  3. "The Baptist<sup>m</sup> of John and the Qumran Community," HTR, Vol. L, No. 3 (July, 1957), 175ff.
  4. See Burrows, More Light . . ., p. 369.
  5. Cross, The Ancient Library . . ., p. 65.



so, it is further evidence that in the end God would be merciful to his own--the faithful, penitent members of the sect.

To conclude, the Essenes believed in God's present forgiveness to those who entered into their own strictly obedient sect and participated consistently in its work and worship. Possibly they hoped to expiate the sins of the world by their obedience, but the passages are too obscure to determine precisely their hope in this regard. When the End came they would have served as a living "temple" of God, a standard to the world, and they probably believed that only their community would be morally and ceremonially clean enough to be acceptable vessels for God's gift of forgiveness.

### Summary

1. In the Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha and Rabbinic theology the tendency is to consider sins as infractions of the Law. One could avoid them if he wished.

2. God is one who forgives these infractions, but his forgiveness is dependent upon the sinner's repentance.

3. The doctrine of repentance takes on an increasing amount of importance as a means of obtaining forgiveness and atonement. It can be called the Jewish doctrine of salvation. Joseph Klausner summarizes:

A man must redeem himself from sin not by faith alone, but by repentance and good works; . . . Each man is responsible for himself, and through his good deeds he must find atonement for his sins.<sup>1</sup>

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1. The Messianic Idea . . ., p. 530. The italics are his.

In addition to repentance other means of achieving forgiveness were recognized; e.g., prayer, the cult (especially, the Day of Atonement), the merits of the righteous, the vicarious death of the martyrs, suffering, one's own death, membership in the strict Essene community, etc.

4. As regards the Gentiles and God's forgiveness there is a predominantly particularistic view. Later Judaism's outlook becomes much narrower than that in the Old Testament. However, there yet remain some who had a wider vision.

5. The hope of an end to sin and evil in the Golden Age of the Messiah is very much alive.

PART TWO

FULFILLMENT WITHIN THE NEW COVENANT

## Introduction: Sin in the New Testament

The New Testament writers, building on the Old, appear to take the fact of sin for granted. It is an assumption behind the initial preaching of both John and Jesus (Mk. 1.4,15). The "doctrine of sin" writes Vincent Taylor, "is the necessary foundation to the understanding of God's redemptive work . . . the presumption of the good news of Christianity."<sup>1</sup>

### Terminology for Sin in the New Testament:

Since comprehensive studies of this are available,<sup>2</sup> it will be helpful here to note only the narrowing of the field from the wide variety of terms used in the Old Testament. The chief words are limited to ἁμαρτάνω (with cognates occurring 270 times), ἁδικέω (with cognates, 68 times), ἀνομία (with cognates, 23), παραπτώμα (21), παραβαίνω (with cognates, 13 times).

By far the most recurrent and definitive term for sin in the New Testament is ἁμαρτία (174). Carrying over its LXX significance, it denotes an offense against God, with the emphasis on guilt, and refers to such sin in three principal forms: (a) as a single act (= ἁμάρτημα), (b) as a characteristic of human nature, and (c) as a personal power external to man.<sup>3</sup> It always

1. Forgiveness and Reconciliation (2d ed.; London: Macmillan & Co., 1946), pp. xviif.
2. See E. R. Bernard, "Sin," HDB, IV, 532-36; Quell et al, Sin, pp. 46-52; Smith, The Bible Doctrine of Sin . . ., pp. 141-54.
3. Quell et al, Sin, p. 49.



refers to individual sinful acts in the Synoptic Gospels, Acts, the Pastoral Epistles, and the Apocalypse; and generally in Hebrews and the Catholic Epistles.<sup>1</sup> In these writings it, therefore, generally occurs in the plural. As a characteristic of human nature it refers to <sup>man's</sup> his "inveterate hostility toward God."<sup>2</sup> As R. Bultmann writes, "Sin is not a sort of appendage to man; it is the characteristic of sinful humanity."<sup>3</sup> It is in the Pauline and Johannine writings that ἁμαρτία refers to a personal power. This is found especially in Romans 5,6,7. Although it is difficult to know exactly what Paul had in mind, it is probable that he conceived of there being a cosmic power of evil which could βασιλεύει, κυριεύει, κατεργάζεται.<sup>4</sup> Taking into consideration Paul's other references to Satan<sup>5</sup> or powers of evil, Sanday and Headlam write, "It is at least clear that he is speaking of an influence external to man and acting

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1. Ibid.

2. Ibid., p. 50.

3. Jesus and the Word, trans. L. P. Smith and E. Huntress (London: Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1934), p. 198.

4. So Quell et al, Sin, pp. 50-52.

5. Σατανας is often mentioned as one who hinders the work of the church (I Thess. 2.18; II Cor. 2.11), tempts individual Christians (I Cor. 7.5), has followers who suffer the consequences (I Cor. 5.5) and deceives men (II Thess. 2.9; II Cor. 11.14). The powers of evil are sometimes conceived as a formidable array of forces (Eph. 6.12; cf. Col. 2.15). ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἵματος τοῦτου is mentioned in II Cor. 4.4 and his rule will only be finally destroyed by Christ's coming in triumph (II Thess. 2.8ff.; I Cor. 15.24ff.).

upon him in the way in which spiritual forces act."<sup>1</sup>

### The Development of the Idea of Sin in the New Testament

The nature of sin is more clearly revealed in the New Testament. As in the Old Testament, sin in the New is conceived as a religious concept. As Vincent Taylor has put it, sin has its character "in virtue of man's relationship to God."<sup>2</sup> This relationship is deepened and clarified in the advent of the Messiah of God. In him the apostolic faith saw the nature of God and the high purpose of God for men.<sup>3</sup> In him it was seen that man was created to live "in a relation of loving trust and obedience towards God, and in God's love of him . . . he was made in love, by love, for love."<sup>4</sup> Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7) emphasizes this relationship of God's loving care for men and his absolute demands upon them. The import of sin, consequently, lies in the fact that man (individually and

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1. W. Sanday and A. C. Headlam, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, (10th ed.; "The International Critical Commentary"; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1905), p. 146.
  2. Forgiveness . . ., p. xvi. Charles Williams, The Forgiveness of Sins (London: Geoffrey Bless: The Centenary Press, 1942), p. 33, writes, "Sin is the name of a certain relationship between man and God."
  3. To support this "proof texts" are inadequate, though many can be cited. I accept the conclusions of Vincent Taylor, The Person of Christ in New Testament Teaching (London: Macmillan, 1958); the trinitarian formula is the logical inference from the witness of the New Testament.
  4. Newbigin, Sin and Salvation, p. 17.

corporately) fractures this relationship. It can be described in many ways: "unbelief,"<sup>1</sup> "the desire of man to live his own life in his own way, apart from God,"<sup>2</sup> "a condition of alienation from God, not merely one of ignorance . . . but of hostility to Him and to His purposes."<sup>3</sup> All of this shows itself most clearly in man's rejection and crucifixion of God's Messiah. The centrality of Jesus Christ in the apostolic message gives validity to C. Ryder Smith's conclusion: "In the New Testament the ultimate question is not 'Are you a murderer or publican or prodigal or Pharisee?' and so on, but 'What are you going to do about Jesus?'"<sup>4</sup> "Ye will not come unto me that ye may have life' (Jn. 5.40) is everywhere the sin of sins."<sup>5</sup>

Sin affects the whole man. The New Testament message implies that the whole man is affected by sin. It is not simply

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1. Ibid., 20. So also Søren Kierkegaard, The Sickness Unto Death, trans. Walter Lowrie (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1954), p. 213.
  2. Emil Brunner, The Divine Imperative (London: Lutterworth Press, 1937), p. 146. D. M. Baillie, God Was In Christ: An Essay on Incarnation and Atonement (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948), p. 164, calls "self-centeredness" the essence of sin.
  3. Taylor, Forgiveness . . ., p. xvi. Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, IV, 1: The Doctrine of Reconciliation, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1956), p. 41, writes: "Radically and basically all sin is simply ingratitude" to the grace of God.
  4. The Bible Doctrine of Sin . . ., p. 176. The italics are his.
  5. Ibid., 177.



resultant upon a duality in man, a conflict between a good soul and an evil body so that sin becomes the mistake of a basically good person or the failure to carry out one's good intentions. The evil deeds and words of men are only outward symptoms; the disease (cf. Mk. 2.17) itself is an evil heart. Sin is not just "mistakes" but a "heart and mind alienated from good and seeking evil . . . Sin is something which is seated at the very center of human personality. It is a corruption of the heart and soul of man"<sup>1</sup> (cf. Rom. 7.7-24). This, of course, is far from the "optimistic" view of the nature of man held by Later Judaism. The New Testament writers, however, were not "pessimists" without reason. They had seen the highest religion and a splendid government cooperate to reject the incarnation of love and holiness.

Certainly the writers would not hold that man is totally deprived of every good quality.<sup>2</sup> Yet even when this is recognized it does not, as Vincent Taylor writes,

invalidate the view that it [sin] is egoistic and destructive of fellowship with God and men. Such an estimate of sin is a presumption of the good news of Christianity. The apostles of genial humanism are the false friends of humanity, in that they minimize the facts of sin which are the cause of frustrated lives and a disordered world.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Newbigin, Sin and Salvation, p. 24.

2. For example, the effect of John's preaching on Herod and Herodias (Mk. 6.17ff.) shows that even the most heedless cannot completely ignore truth. See Smith, The Bible Doctrine of Sin . . ., pp. 164-69; Taylor, Forgiveness . . ., xviii.

3. Forgiveness . . ., p. xviii.



All individual men sin. The New Testament assumes that all men are sinners;<sup>1</sup> the only exception is Jesus (cf. II Cor. 5.21; Heb. 4.15; I Pet. 2.22; I Jn. 3.5). In regard to Jesus' own belief about the extent of sin R. Bultmann rightly points out that Jesus does not discuss sin in the abstract "but speaks to sinful men."<sup>2</sup> And H. Wheeler Robinson correctly concludes that "there can be no doubt that He held sin to be universally present in the actual world."<sup>3</sup> Numerous texts from the whole of the New Testament might be cited to show the universality of sin, yet the main argument is that the New Testament's inclusive offer of salvation implies that it is universally needed.<sup>4</sup>

Sin has its consequences.<sup>5</sup> Since by definition sin is a schism between God and men, its consequences derive from the schism itself. Man rejects the command and the offered communion with God, so he is left guilty and alone. "The judgment," writes Chas. Williams, "is to leave the sinner to the sin, to the ruin and the exile and the pain."<sup>6</sup> The writers do not con-

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1. Quell et al, Sin, p. 89.

2. Jesus . . ., pp. 197f.

3. The Christian Doctrine . . ., p. 92.

4. Smith, The Bible Doctrine of Sin . . ., p. 159, writes: "It would be foolish to offer 'salvation' to all unless all were sinners."

5. This discussion of sin is simply introductory to the major study of forgiveness. Therefore, it will not deal with the matters of the origin and transmission of sin.

6. The Forgiveness . . ., p. 47.

sider that such consequences just happen. As in the Old Testament, so it is true in the New that sin evokes the personal wrath ( $\acute{\omicron}\rho\gamma\acute{\eta}$  Matt. 3.7; Lk. 21.23; Rom. 1.18; 2.5) and judgment ( $\kappa\rho\acute{\iota}\mu\alpha$ , Rom. 2.2,3; cf. Mk. 9.42-48) of the righteous God. Moreover, as a personified power sin enslaves men (Jn. 8.34; Rom. 6.6) and reigns over them (Rom. 5.20; 6.12,14). Ultimately, its result is spiritual death (Rom. 5.12,21; 6.23). As E. Lohmeyer writes " . . . die Suende kann und muss Tod heissen, weil sie dem Gedanken des Seins widerspricht, das der Mensch vor Gott haben soll."<sup>1</sup> The ancient story of Adam and Eve in Gen. 3 presents the essential ideas about sin as it is understood also in the New Testament. In the Christ-event God shows up sin to be what it really is and deals with it once and for all.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Die briefe an die Philipper, an die Kolosser und an Philemon ("Kritische exegetischer kommentar ueber das Neue Testament, begreundet von H. A. W. Meyer, 9 abt., 8 aufl.; Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1930), p. 113.
  2. See E. Stauffer, New Testament Theology, trans. John Marsh (London: SCM Press, 1955), Chapter 14.

## CHAPTER III

### EVIDENCE IN THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS OF THE APOSTOLIC CONCEPT OF DIVINE FORGIVENESS

#### An Investigation of the Apostolic Interpretation of the Teaching and Action of Jesus which Bear on Divine Forgiveness

#### Introduction

The fact of sin being presupposed, the New Testament loses no time in presenting its message: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel." (Mk. 1.15). Sin is assumed, but the reader of the synoptic gospels is never left to doubt that in the advent and work of Jesus, sin was not an impenetrable barrier. It may be noted, for example, that in the first three gospels the noun sin ( $\alphaμαρτία$ ) is used 24 times, but it is almost never mentioned without an explicit reference to forgiveness ( $\alphaφεσις$  or  $\alphaφίημι$  or  $σωζω$ ).<sup>1</sup>

In this study of the teaching of Jesus about forgiveness it will not be possible to separate the teacher from that which is taught, nor will it be possible to isolate the teaching about forgiveness from the rest of the message of Jesus. However, for the purposes of study three kinds of material will

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1. The only possible exception is in Matthew's account of John's message (3.2,6), but even here it is probable that  $\alphaφεσις$  was originally used. Matthew omitted it for reasons of his own.

be investigated. First, those passages which explicitly mention divine forgiveness; second, the parabolic sayings of Jesus which have reference to forgiveness; third, those narrative passages and sayings of Jesus which may imply forgiveness.

The aim of this section is to set forth the meaning of those passages related to divine forgiveness even though they have of necessity been artificially disentangled from the whole complex of the witness of the synoptic gospels to Jesus.

### Passages Explicitly Mentioning Forgiveness

The terms which specifically signify "forgiveness," "remission" or "pardon" and which are employed in the Synoptic Gospels are ἄφῃμη <sup>1</sup> (42), ἄφεσις (8), ἀπολύω (2),

1. See Rudolf Bultmann, "ἀφέναι," KThWNT, I, 506-09. Greek usage: it is widely used colloquially to mean "to let go," "release," "to fling away," "to abandon," "to permit." Its judicial usage is richly attested in the papyri: "to dismiss (or) discharge one from legal relationships," as an official duty, marriage, arrest, debt, or fine (but never in a religious sense). LXX usage: it is used (a) for a series of verbs meaning "letting go," "releasing," "abandoning," "granting or permitting" particularly frequently for נָתַן or נָתַתְּ; (b) for verbs of forgiveness: כָּשַׁף (e.g., Ex. 32.32), נָסַח (e.g., Lev. 4.20; Is. 55.7), נָסַח (Is. 22.14). The object of the forgiveness is usually ἁμαρτία, ἄνομία, etc. Ἀφέναι corresponds to כָּשַׁף in meaning, but all idea of cultic removal or expiation of sin in נָסַח and נָסַח is lost since ἀφέναι emphasizes the judicial meaning--the cancelling of legal bindings. In the New Testament: ἀφέναι has its customary uses. The following are predominant: (a) "to send away" (e.g., τοὺς ὄχλους, Matt. 13.36); "yield up" (e.g., τὸ πνεῦμα, Matt. 27.50); "to remit (or) forgive" (e.g., τὸ δάνειον, Matt. 18.27; τὴν ὀφειλὴν, Matt. 18.32; τὰ παραπτώματα, Matt. 6.14; τὰς ἁμαρτίας, τὰ ἁμαρτήματα, τὰς ἀνομίας, Mk. 2.5,7; etc., often); ἀφέναι is used as opposed to κρατεῖν in Jn. 20.23; (b) "to permit," "to allow," i.e., "not to hinder" (e.g., Mk. 10.14); (c) "to leave, go away from" (e.g., Matt. 22.22; Mk. 1.31).



and ἱλάσκειν (1).<sup>1</sup> The passages in which these terms occur may be arranged for convenience as follows:

### Markan Passages

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|--|-----|-----------------------|
| 1. The Roof Paralytic Episode                      | --- | 2.1-12 and parallels  |
| 2. The Unpardonable Sin                            | --- | 3.28-29 and parallels |
| 3. The Comment on the Parable<br>of the Sower      | --- | 4.10-12               |
| 4. "Whenever you stand, praying,<br>forgive . . ." | --- | 11.25 and parallel    |

### Passages Common to Matthew and Luke (from Q or thought to be common to both of their peculiar sources)

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|---|-----|----------------------------|
| 5. The Lord's Prayer                      | --- | Mt. 6.12 and Lk.11.4       |
| 6. "Forgive and you will be<br>forgiven;" | --- | Lk. 6.37                   |
| 7. Forgiveness to the brother             | --- | Mt. 18.21-22 and Lk.17.3-4 |

Ἰλῆσις, the substantive, has the same wide use as the verb in pre-New Testament Greek. It, too, was never used in a religious sense. In the LXX Ἰλῆσις serves for יְיָ (the "liberation" of the Year of Jubilee, e.g., Lev. 25.10; note, especially, Is. 58.6; 61.1); for יְיָ (the "Jubilee," itself, often in Lev. 25 and 27); for רְשָׁוָה ("release," Deut. 15.1,2,9; 31.10); and for others. In Lev. 16.26 the scapegoat is identified as the one set apart εἰς Ἰλῆσιν. This is possibly a reference to his function of being a means of divine forgiveness. If so, it is the only, yet important, use in the LXX of the term for God's forgiveness. The use in this passage, its use for the divinely decreed liberation (Lev. 25.10; Is. 61.1), for the Jubilee and for the year of release all serve as a preparation for its New Testament use. In the New Testament: it is almost always used of God's forgiveness and usually occurs with the Genitive ἁμαρτιῶν. The legal idea of God as Judge is retained but enriched by the Old Testament ideas of the God-ordained years of release and Jubilee. The proclamation of the Jubilee on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 25.9) suggests that the idea of an expiatory sacrifice is not far removed from the proclamation of liberation and Jubilee (Lev. 25.10).

1. Elsewhere with the meaning of "forgiveness," Ἰλῆσις occurs 7 times (twice in Jn. and I Jn.; once each in Acts, Rom., and Jas.); Ἰλῆσις occurs 9 times (5 in Acts; twice in Heb.; and once each in Eph. and Col.); ἀπολύω never occurs again

Passages Peculiar to Matthew

- |   |     |              |
|---|-----|--------------|
| 8. The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant      | --- | Mt. 18.23-35 |
| 9. The Lord's Supper Reference to Forgiveness | --- | 26.28        |

Passages Peculiar to Luke<sup>1</sup>

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|---|-----|----------|
| 10. The Reading in the Nazareth Synagogue | --- | Lk. 4.18 |
| 11. The Woman that was a Sinner           | --- | 7.36-50  |
| 12. Prayer from the Cross                 | --- | 23.34    |
| 13. Commission to the Disciples           | --- | 24.47    |

The Forgiving and Healing of the Roof Paralytic (Mk. 2.1-12 and parallels)

Resourceful friends of a paralyzed man succeed in getting him into the presence of Jesus who at the time was talking to a large group of people in a house in Capernaum. In the account Jesus' initial statement is the forgiving of the paralytic's sins, and then, in response to the charge of blasphemy he heals the man before the eyes of the onlookers in proof of the fact that "the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins."

The Composition of the Passage and its Place in the Gospel Narrative.

The immediate impression is that this story has two centers of interest--the forgiveness of sins and the healing. This double interest has prompted questions as to the unity of the passage. Is it possible that in the transmission of the tradition

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with this meaning; ἑλάσκειν only occurs one other time (in Heb.), but see the use of ἐλαττήριον in Rom. and ἑλασμός in I John.

1. The Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican (ἑλάσκειν) will be considered in the next section; see p. 174.

before Mark received it a miracle story was expanded in the interest of Christian apologetics so that it served to substantiate the church's offer of forgiveness of sins? Professor Bultmann, who holds this to be the case,<sup>1</sup> says that the whole matter of forgiveness (vss. 5b-10a) has been added to the older miracle story. Scholars today generally agree that this passage gives evidence of being a compilation, for there are differences which can be noticed between vss. 5b-10 and the rest of the passage.<sup>2</sup> However, these hints at a compilation do not necessarily divide the passage as Professor Bultmann has done. On second look its two foci of interest may be found to be elsewhere. It has been cogently argued that the division of the passage is not between forgiveness and healing but between the dual gift (of forgiveness-healing) in vss. 1-5, 11-12 and the question concerning Jesus' right to offer forgiveness (6-10).<sup>3</sup> The suggestion is that the break in the story occurs between the 5th and 6th verses. Jesus' word of forgiveness to the man in vs. 5b was

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1. Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition (2d. ed. rev.; Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1931), pp. 12ff., 227. So also A. E. J. Rawlinson, St. Mark ("Westminster Commentaries"; 7th ed.; London: Methuen & Co., 1949), p. 25; E. Lohmeyer, Das Evangelium des Markus ("Meyer's Kommentar"; Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1937), pp. 49ff.
  2. See Martin Dibelius, From Tradition to Gospel, trans. B. L. Woolf (London: Ivor Nicholson and Watson, 1934), pp. 66f.; B. H. Branscomb, The Gospel of Mark ("Moffatt New Testament Commentary"; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1937), pp. 44ff.; F. G. Gealy, JR, 18 (1938), pp. 51ff.; Wm. Manson, Jesus the Messiah (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1943), pp. 40ff. Cf. A. Cabanis, Inter., XI, 3 (July, 1957), 324ff., who holds that "the stylistic composition of this passage was framed in accordance with the basic order of the primitive Christian Eucharist."
  3. See Dibelius, From Tradition . . ., pp. 66f.; Branscomb,



probably coincident with the healing miracle. Historically, they belong together, or else, as Wm. Manson reasons, "it fails to appear why the incident became the occasion for such doctrinal elaboration"<sup>1</sup> as is allegedly found in vss. 6-10. The reason, then, that the controversy over Jesus' authority to forgive was attached to this narrative may most naturally be seen in the fact that forgiveness was an original part of it; indeed, it must have been "the core of the original narrative."<sup>2</sup>

As to the questions of the historical accuracy of the report of the controversy (vss. 6-10) and the connection of the report with this particular episode, we are left ultimately to the integrity of Mark's interpretative account. The writer of the gospel was a thinking man in a living situation. The influence of Christian preaching,<sup>3</sup> of anti-Jewish apologetic,<sup>4</sup> of eyewitnesses,<sup>5</sup> of Mark's own purpose and understanding undoubtedly had

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"Mark 2.5, 'Son Thy Sins are Forgiven,'" JBL, 53 (1934), 53-60; Wm. Manson, Jesus . . ., pp. 41f.; Gealy, JR, 18 (1938), 51ff.

1. The Gospel of Luke ("The Moffatt New Testament Commentary"; London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1930), p. 53.
2. Ibid.
3. See Dibelius, From Tradition . . ., pp. 66f.
4. See Gealy, JR, 18 (1938), 51ff.; Lohmeyer, Markus, p. 54.
5. See Vincent Taylor, The Gospel According to St. Mark (London: Macmillan & Co., 1952), p. 192, who comments, "It seems reasonable to suggest that historical testimony would be preferred to creative invention at a time when eyewitnesses still lived. This consideration suggests that the account is historical and not Gemeindetheologie."



their bearing on the formation of the story. Consequently, the tracing of the formation of the tradition behind Mark is based largely on conjectures. The important question for this study is: "What use has Mark made of the story?"

It may be quickly noted that it occupies a prominent position in the unfolding of Mark's whole gospel. Jesus begins his ministry: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel" (1.15). This announcement is followed by numerous signs (through Jesus) which witness to the presence and realization of this kingdom. Disciples are called and immediately follow (1.16-20); the word of God is taught with authority (ἐξουσία)--not as the scribes teach (1.21-22); unclean spirits, recognizing Jesus as "the Holy One of God," are exorcised (1.23-27, 34b); and the sick are healed (1.29-34a, 40-44). Jesus' fame spreads (1.45). To this introduction to the person and work of Jesus and to the manifestations of the kingdom of God Mark adds a large section (2.1-3.6) to show the authority and power of Jesus as they contrast and conflict with the established religious leaders of the day. This section consists of five "pronouncement-stories"<sup>1</sup> of which the passage at hand (2.1-12) is the first. All of them turn on a point of controversy, i.e. the matter of eating with tax-gatherers and sinners (2.15ff), the question of fasting (2.18ff.),

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1. See Taylor, Mark, pp. 91f.

and the Sabbath (2.23-3.6). The section ends with the opposition plotting the death of Jesus (3.6). There is no doubt that for Mark the important point in 2.1-12 is Jesus' authority to forgive sins, for this is the point of the controversy with the scribes.

### The Teaching of this Incident Regarding Forgiveness

Who bestows forgiveness in this passage?--Some commentators and scholars of years past have held that Jesus here claims no more authority to forgive than the ordinary man possesses.<sup>1</sup> In fact, he was revealing the kind of forgiveness that all men ought to exercise.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, it is probable, as many scholars have held, that Jesus is portrayed as actually forgiving sins with unique authority.<sup>3</sup> There are several reasons which support the latter conclusion. (a) The scribes who were there questioned him: "Why does this man speak thus? It is blasphemy!"

1. So A. B. Bruce, Exp. Grk. Test., I, 148, 351; A. H. McNeile, The Gospel According to St. Matthew (London: Macmillan & Co., 1915), p. 117; Foakes-Jackson and Lake, The Beginnings . . ., I, 379.
2. So Bruce, Exp. Grk. Test., I, 149.
3. So Taylor, Mark, pp. 196ff.; A. Menzies, The Earliest Gospel (London: Macmillan & Co., 1901), p. 81; B. S. Easton, The Gospel According to St. Luke (New York: Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1926), p. 66; Dibelius, From Tradition . . ., pp. 66f.; C. G. Montefiore, The Synoptic Gospels (2d ed.; London: Macmillan & Co., 1927), I, 44ff., holds that Mark clearly means the reader to understand that Jesus ascribed this power to himself because of his special office; E. Klostermann, Das Markusevangelium ("Handbuch Zum Neuen Testament": 2d. ed.; Tuebingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1926), p. 27, writes, "Man versteht wohl nicht, dass Jesus als blosser Verkuender der goettlichen Vergebung auftritt, sondern dass er die Suenden von sich aus vergibt." Cf. contra, Gealy, JR (1938), 55.

Who can forgive sins but God alone?" (Mk. 2.7). Jesus and, no doubt, others saw the unbelief of the scribes. Their assumption that God alone could forgive sins was always the assumption of rabbinic theology.<sup>1</sup> It may be added that it was nowhere expected that the Messiah would have the authority.<sup>2</sup> The Jews believed that forgiveness was available upon conditions, but only God could bestow it. Their charge indicates that they considered Jesus to have usurped the prerogative of God. This is strong evidence that Jesus assured forgiveness to the man in an unprecedented way. (b) Jesus is portrayed as not denying the implied charge but proceeds to justify his claim. "Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your pallet and walk?'" Of course, the answer is, "Neither." Both are impossible to men, but at least the power to heal could be put to the test. Therefore, to verify his authority to forgive, he heals, and this in the case of a paralytic is self-authenticating. The assumption of the scribes is not denied. Only God can forgive, yet the point is substantiated before their eyes--this man forgives sins. The logical conclusion and decision was left to them, that is, Jesus had a unique relationship to God.<sup>3</sup> (c) In Mark 2.10 there is attributed to

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1. Strack-Bill., I, 495, write: "Die Suendenvergebung bleibt ueberall das ausschliessliche Recht Gottes; . . ." So also R. H. Charles, Religious Development . . ., p. 76.
  2. So Strack-Bill., I, 495; Mowinckel, He That Cometh, p. 318.
  3. See Taylor, "Detached Note," Mark, pp. 200f.; C. K. Barrett, The Holy Spirit and the Gospel Tradition (London: S.P.C.K., 1947), p. 82, writes, "The authority which Jesus claims by his absolution of the paralytic is divine."



Jesus the words: "But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins . . . ." To whom does the term "Son of man" refer? This has prompted much investigation.<sup>1</sup> It is usually acknowledged that the relationship between the Son of man and Jesus who speaks sometimes eludes precise and final definition for it involves the whole eschatological message of Jesus.<sup>2</sup> However, here, as R. Bultmann points out, "Wenn die ἐξουσία des υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου zur Suendenvergebung behauptet wird, so ist der 'Menschensohn' zweifellos Jesus."<sup>3</sup> W. G. Kuemmel in his recent study of the eschatology of Jesus goes further. He maintains that Jesus throughout his teaching promised a future coming of the Son of man and the Kingdom but at the same time was realizing in his ministry on earth the fulfillment and guarantee of that which was to come. He holds, with M. Black, that this verse which refers to ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς is in full

1. See pp. 211ff. of this thesis. See also the list of recent discussions collected by W. G. Kuemmel, Promise and Fulfillment, trans. D. M. Barton (Naperville, Ill.: A. R. Allenson, 1957), pp. 44ff. There are brief summaries by T. W. Manson, The Teaching of Jesus (Cambridge: University Press, 1935), pp. 211ff.; Taylor, Mark, pp. 199f.
2. For representative statements of contrasting opinions see C. C. McCown, "Jesus, Son of Man, A Survey of Recent Discussion," JR, 28 (1948), 1ff. and M. Black, "The 'Son of Man' in the Teaching of Jesus," ET, 60 (1948-49), 32ff.
3. Die Geschichte . . ., p. 13.



accord with this duality.<sup>1</sup> That is, in Jesus and his forgiveness the future Son of man and his judgment was already in process of being fulfilled among men "on earth." (d) There are two significant words that may be used as evidence that Jesus here bestowed or mediated divine forgiveness in some unparalleled sense, as the scribes recognized. The first is ἀφίενται (Mk. 2.5 and Matt. 9.2), in the present indicative passive, which may be a better attested reading than ἀφέωνται in the perfect passive.<sup>2</sup> Though the present is normally progressive, it is here probably specific, an "aoristic present."<sup>3</sup> If this is so, the statement comes to mean, "Thy sins are forgiven at this moment."<sup>4</sup> Even if the perfect passive is read with Luke 5.20 the resultant present state of being forgiven gives evidence of the authoritative declaration which Jesus made. The use of the passive voice indicates that the ultimate source of the pardon is God; Jesus mediates it on earth with "authority."<sup>5</sup> Secondly, the word ἐξουσία (Mk. 2.10 pars.) is important. The word indicates

1. Kuemmel, Promise and . . ., p. 46, note 93.

2. So Taylor, Mark, p. 195.

3. As, e.g., in σοὶ λέγω Mk. 5.41 and ἴστα Acts 9.34. So J. H. Moulton, A Grammar of New Testament Greek (3d ed.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1908), I, 119; A. T. Robertson, A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1914), p. 866.

4. So Moulton, A Grammar . . ., I, 119.

5. See Joachim Jeremias, The Parables of Jesus, trans. S. H. Hooke (London: SCM Press, 1954), p. 144.

that Jesus had such a measure of authority that he had the power to act. It is an authority given by God (Matt. 9.8; 28.19), but "it is not to be understood as a limited commission but to be understood as an exercise of office (Verwaltung) in free unity with the will of the Father."<sup>1</sup> It includes both the concepts of right and inherent power. Referring to vs. 10, L. W. Foerster notes:

Der Nachdruck liegt auf ἐνὶ ᾧ, wie vorher auf dem Praesens ἀφίενται; darum ἐξουσία nicht Recht, Sündenvergebung zu verkuenden--das geschieht immer ἐνὶ ᾧ --sondern das Recht und die Macht, sie zu vollziehen.<sup>2</sup>

(e) The miracle of healing which amazed the crowds (Mk. 2.12 pars.) is presented as final evidence for the uniqueness of the claim of Jesus. If he was claiming a power inherent in all men, would he have performed a humanly impossible healing to substantiate the claim? An astonishingly new one had come among the people. He had authority over their relationship to God and over their physical ills.

These arguments lead to the conclusion that Jesus manifests "power not only to announce the forgiveness of sins, but, as God's representative, actually to forgive them; in short, to come forward as the divine Pardon incarnate."<sup>3</sup>

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1. L. W. Foerster, "ἐξουσία," KThWNT, II, 565.

2. Ibid., p. 566, note 39. Cf. Mk. 3.15; 6.7 par., Lk. 10.19 where it is assumed that Jesus possesses the power which he transmits.

3. A. M. Hunter, The Gospel According to St. Mark ("Torch Bible Commentaries," London: SCM Press, 1949), p. 38. Taylor, Mark, p. 201, writes that the "action is divine rather than

What is the nature of the forgiveness bestowed?--

So little is told about this paralytic and about the whole meeting with Jesus that conclusions about the meaning of the forgiveness bestowed must be drawn with caution. Forgiveness itself is expressed by a commonly used word, ἀφίεναι; it states that the paralytic's sins have been "discharged," "remitted," "abandoned." It carries the idea of a final and complete abandonment of claim. By use of this term Jesus assures the man that any claims (of himself and/or God) arising out of the paralytic's sins are immediately forsaken. He no longer stands guilty before God.

What are the conditions of forgiveness in this

passage?--Again scarcity of evidence demands cautious conclusions.

First, it must be noted that "their faith" cannot be limited simply to the τεσσαρῶν who carried the paralytic; it probably includes also the invalid himself.<sup>1</sup> The adverbial clause καὶ ὁῶν . . . τὴν πίστιν αὐτῶν (Mk. 2.5) has more than a temporal reference; it describes the cause, or, at least, the circumstances

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declaratory, but it does not invade the prerogative of Almighty God. If we have no word to describe action of this kind, we should recognize that this is precisely the situation in which we must find ourselves if we think of the spiritual functions of One who is in truth the Son of God, but who took the form of a servant, being found in the likeness of men. It is, however, too naive an explanation of the narrative to suppose that it was devised simply to illustrate this theological truth. We must think of it rather as belonging to the historical data out of which the doctrine of the Incarnation takes its rise."

1. So E. P. Gould, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Mark (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1896), p. 36; Taylor, Mark, p. 194; A. Plummer, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Luke (ICC: 3d ed.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1900), p. 154; E. Lohmeyer, Markus, p. 51.



attending the bestowal of forgiveness. The substance of their faith can only be concluded from their unusual, daring persistence, from their decision to come specifically to Jesus, and from the usual meaning which Mark gives to this word, πίστις<sup>1</sup>. Here "it denotes a confident trust in Jesus and in His power to help."<sup>2</sup>

What was Jesus' conception of the relationship between forgiveness and physical healing?--In this passage (Mk.2.1-12) no relationship between this man's sins and his sickness is explicitly indicated by Mark or the other Synoptic writers. Prima facie there are two separate miracles--the latter to give credence to the former. Any conclusions about the relationship of forgiveness to healing in the mind of Jesus or Mark would, therefore, have to rest on inferences.

Generally speaking, the Old Testament and especially later Judaism held that disease was due to sin (though neither were without voices of doubt).<sup>3</sup> Commentators have generally inferred that Jesus, in some sense, did believe that the man's

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1. Mark uses the word five times (2.5; 4.40; 5.34; 10.52; 11.22). Except for the final use, it always refers to the believer's trust in the power of Jesus to help and this trust is always confirmed by Jesus' action at the time. W. A. Whitehouse, "Faith," ThWBB, p. 76, summarizes, "In the Synoptic Gospels, the faith to which Jesus summons men is confident conviction that God, through His Messiah, was able to do what he had promised through the prophets. It is decisive response to the proffered resources of God, directly present now in the flesh of his Son."
  2. Taylor, Mark, p. 194.
  3. For the Old Testament see Ex. 15.26; Lev. 26.14ff.; Deut.28.15; Job; E. R. Micklem, Miracles and the New Psychology (London:



spiritual restoration was a primary and indispensable condition to his physical recovery.<sup>1</sup> This may well be, but in the final analysis nothing definite can be known from this passage about the relationship between sin and disease in the mind of Jesus. The emphasis of the passage is elsewhere.

It is suggested that Mk. 2.1-12 must be considered against the proclamation of the proximity of the kingdom of God (Mk. 1.15; Lk. 4.21) and against the background of the purpose of Jesus (Lk. 4.16-20). The resulting interpretation would then emphasize not the unity of the paralytic's nature (his sin and his disease) but the fact that one confronted the paralytic who had authority over the whole man. "The power of Jesus to give life and His authority to forgive sins are inseparable."<sup>2</sup> Concluding his comments on Mk. 2.1-12 Ernst Lohmeyer states: "The account itself (including the sin-forgiving word of 2.5) pictures Jesus as the appearing glad-tidings (Freudenboten) of Is. 61.1, whom 'God has sent, to bring good news to the poor' (2.2)

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Oxford Univ. Press, 1922), p. 31; for Judaism see Abrahams, Studies in . . ., pp. 108-12; Montefiore, The Synoptic . . ., I, 43; cf. Nedarim, 41a, "No sick man is healed until his sins have been forgiven him." See Strack-Bill., I, 495f.

1. So Gould, Mark, p. 38; Taylor, Mark, p. 195; Montefiore, The Synoptic . . ., I, 47.
2. A. Schlatter, quoted by E. C. Hoskyns, The Fourth Gospel, ed. F. N. Davey (2d. ed. rev.; London: Faber and Faber, 1947), p. 266.

to heal the broken hearted (2.11), to proclaim to the prisoners release (*ἀφέναι*, 2.5)."<sup>1</sup>

Finally, it is submitted that the incident of the roof paralytic is to be interpreted not as (a) a proof of the primacy of forgiveness over healing nor as (b) an indication that Jesus held forgiveness of sins to be necessary for complete physical healing (though these may possibly be true). Rather it was a sign, to those who would see, that Jesus himself was effecting the kingdom of God--the God "who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases" (Ps. 103.3). Mark is here emphasizing not the unity of man (in sin and disease) but the unity of word and deed in Jesus<sup>2</sup> and his authority over the whole of man.

#### Summary:

1. Jesus forgives sins and verifies this by a healing miracle. Thus, Mark presents him as the Messiah, who has authority over the whole of man.
2. He is portrayed as having had the authority on earth to effect immediate pardon.
3. Forgiveness here presumably consists of a complete cancelling and remission of all sins and their barriers between the paralytic and God.

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1. Markus, p. 54. In this connection see Hoskyns, The Fourth Gospel, p. 263, who holds that healings of the lame are signs of the end and advent of the Messiah. So also J. S. Stewart, The Life and Teachings of Jesus Christ (Edinburgh: Committee on Publications of The Church of Scotland, 1933), pp. 99ff.
  2. On this point of the inseparability of the word and act (preaching and healing) see T. F. Torrance, "A Study in New Testament Communication," SJT, III (1950), 307f.

4. This forgiveness is apparently conditioned upon faith in Jesus, i.e. in his power to help.
5. The criticism of the scribes and their conflict with Jesus serves as Mark's first hint of the Jewish rejection of Jesus. From the beginning God's forgiveness was mediated at a cost.

### The Unpardonable Sin

(Mk. 3.28-29 and parallels)

The second specific mention of "forgiveness" in the sayings of Jesus occurs in Mk. 3.28f:

'Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven (ἀφεθήσεται) the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they utter; but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness (ἀφεσις), but is guilty of an eternal sin'--for they had said, 'He has an unclean spirit.'

From Matt. 12.32 and Lk. 12.10 it is obvious that Q also mentions this "unforgivable sin." Luke, it is agreed, gives us the original Q saying which is "a striking example of Semitic antithetic parallelism."<sup>1</sup>

And every one who speaks a word against the Son of man  
will be forgiven;  
but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit  
will not be forgiven. (Lk. 12.10)

Matthew has simply added Mark and Q together in 12.31 and 32.<sup>2</sup>

A significant difference in the Markan and Q accounts is readily apparent. In Mark all sins are forgivable to men except the one--blasphemy against the Spirit. In Q the special sin--invective

1. O. E. Evans, "The Unforgivable Sin," ET, LXVIII, No. 8 (May, 1957), 240.

2. So T. W. Manson, The Teaching . . ., p. 216.

against the Son of man--is forgivable but not blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. The difference between Mark and Q, apparently lies in the matter of what will be forgiven. Both agree as to what will not be forgiven.

Three questions need to be answered. (1) What was the original contrast presented in this saying? (2) What was the original context in which it was uttered? (3) What is its meaning and contribution to the study of divine forgiveness?

#### The Original Contrast Contained in the Saying

It is, of course, possible that the Q and Mark versions have arisen from different sayings of Jesus. However, their difference as to what will be forgiven invites some investigation.

It is said in Q that all who speak a word against the "Son of man" will be forgiven. Some scholars have with various arguments maintained that this stands closer to the original saying.<sup>1</sup> However, there are strong reasons for preferring the Markan reading which does not mention the "Son of man" but indicates that sins generally will be forgiven. (a) C. K. Barrett<sup>2</sup> has argued that the Q reading may reflect the distinction, often made in the early church, between sins committed before becoming

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1. So Rawlinson, Mark, p. 45; S. R. Driver, "Son of Man," HDB, IV, 588a; Easton, Luke, p. 199. These hold that the difficulty of the saying is not the kind that would have been invented later. Cf. the historical argument of A. Fridrichsen and the theological argument of M. Goguel to which R. Bultmann, Die Geschichte . . ., p. 138, note 1, refers.

2. The Holy Spirit . . ., pp. 105ff.



a disciple (these would be against the "Son of man") and those committed after one was a baptized believer (these would be against the Holy Spirit). This suggests that the Q reading is a later tradition. (b) R. Bultmann<sup>1</sup> and E. Klostermann,<sup>2</sup> following J. Wellhausen, prefer Mark's version. They suggest that the Aramaic, bar nasha, originally referred to "man" generically. Whereas in Q it erroneously became the Messianic title, the original meaning is preserved in Mark's "τοῦ υἱοῦ τῶν ἀνθρώπων." (c) The probable context of the saying has yet to be determined, but it is notable that both contexts (Mk. and Lk.) make it very difficult to allow any exoneration for those who might "speak a word against" the "Son of man," i.e. Jesus.<sup>3</sup> In view of the context in Luke 12.8f. T. W. Manson remarks, "This makes an impossible situation."<sup>4</sup> (d) Finally, in view of the identity of the Spirit with the person and work of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels (cf. Mk. 1.10,12; Lk. 4.14, 18, etc.) a distinction here would be an unlikely one. C. G. Montefiore points out that if the "Son of man" translation be taken, then it attributes to Jesus a distinction between himself and the Holy Spirit that is too subtle to be realistic.<sup>5</sup>

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1. Die Geschichte . . . , p. 138.

2. Markus, p. 44.

3. Bultmann, Die Geschichte . . . , p. 138.

4. The Sayings of Jesus (first published as Part II of The Mission and Message of Jesus, 1937; London: SCM Press, 1949), p. 110.

5. The Synoptic . . . , II, 195.

Thus, it may be concluded as reasonably certain that the saying preserved in Mark (3.28) most closely conforms to the original in meaning.<sup>1</sup>

#### The Original Context of this Saying

Here there occurs another difference between Mark and Q. In Mark (which Matthew follows) this warning about the unforgivable sin is connected with the Beelzebul controversy. It is the answer of Jesus to the charge of the Pharisees that he casts out demons by the power of Beelzebul (3.22). Mark makes this connection definite by adding vs. 30: "for they had said, 'He has an unclean spirit.'" On the other hand, the Beelzebul controversy in Q (Lk. 11.14-23)<sup>2</sup> omits this warning. Luke follows Q in placing the blasphemy-utterance with a group of sayings (Lk. 12.8-12) which includes the one about confessing and denying Jesus (12.8f.) and the one about the Holy Spirit's guidance when the disciples are brought before the synagogues (12.11f.). Mark's context appears to be more probable.<sup>3</sup> Luke's arrangement is apparently more topical than historical. Though there are indications in Mark's context that the exorcism story

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1. So Taylor, Mark, p. 242; Montefiore, The Synoptic . . ., I, 117; Wm. Manson, Luke, p. 152; N. H. Snaith, "Forgive," ThWBB, p. 86. Evans, ET, LXVIII, No. 8, 241, seeks to demonstrate that the original would correspond to Q in form but to Mark in meaning.
  2. B. H. Streeter, The Four Gospels (London: Macmillan and Co., 1924), p. 209, designates this as coming from Q.
  3. Plummer, Luke, p. 321; Wm. Manson, Luke, p. 152; Taylor, Mark, p. 241.

circulated separately from the saying, Vincent Taylor concludes,

Mark has rightly divined, or was guided by good tradition in connecting it with the charge of possession by Beelzebul. In the form of a solemn warning against the danger of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit it is a part of the defense of Jesus against that charge.<sup>1</sup>

### The Meaning of the Saying

What will be forgiven? What will not be forgiven?

The severity of the negative part of this saying (Mk. 3.29) has often allowed the affirmative part (Mk. 3.28) to be overlooked. Both Mark and Q agree in the strong affirmation of forgiveness--"

... πάντα ἁφεθήσεται . . . τὰ ἁμαρτήματα καὶ αἱ βλασφημίαι . . ." (Mk.) and " . . . πάντες ὅς ἐρεῖ λόγον εἰς . . . ἁφεθήσεται . . ." (Q).

V. Taylor is undoubtedly right in noting that the "point of outstanding importance in the saying (Mk. 3.28) is the universality of forgiveness apart from the exception noted in the next verse."<sup>2</sup> All the slanders, injuries, and acts of sin of all kinds which men have knowingly perpetrated against other men are forgivable.<sup>3</sup> Such a proclamation by Jesus of the wide forgiving mercy of God must not go unnoticed in any survey of the specific passages on divine forgiveness. It adds weight to his total teaching regarding the scope of God's mercy.

1. Taylor, Mark, p. 241.

2. Mark, p. 243.

3. Cf. A. G. Hebert, "Blasphemy," ThWBB, 32.



Against this background what, precisely, is the sin which is unforgivable? What has one done who has blasphemed against the Holy Spirit (*βλασφημία ἐς<sup>1</sup> τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον*, Mk. 3.29)? Interpreting the saying in the light of the charge made against Jesus of being in league with evil spirits, the sin that cannot be forgiven is "to ascribe to the devil works which are manifestly of God."<sup>2</sup> To stand face to face with the gracious activity of the Spirit of God in the person and work of Jesus and nevertheless deliberately and persistently declare it to be evil and of no account is to blaspheme against the Holy Spirit. C. K. Barrett<sup>3</sup> suggests that the situation here is like that in Isaiah 63.10. There it is stated that when the Israelites rebelled against the gracious activity of God they "grieved his holy spirit" (cf. Eph. 4.30). The verb *βλασφημέω* is "used especially of defiant hostility to God, His name or word, in speech which defies His power and majesty."<sup>4</sup> Thus, it is more of a theological than a moral blindness. To witness persistently the work of God in Jesus and call it evil is unpardonable (cf. Jn. 9.41).<sup>5</sup> Jesus did not say that these scribes had on this

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1. For this same use of *ἐς* see Lk. 22.65; Acts 6.11.
  2. Hunter, *Mark*, p. 51. So also Klostermann, *Markus*, p. 44; Gould, *Mark*, pp. 65f.; Wm. Manson, *Luke*, p. 152; Taylor, *Mark*, p. 243.
  3. *The Holy Spirit . . .*, p. 104f.
  4. Taylor, *Mark*, p. 243. See also Hebert, *ThWBB*, 32; Mk. 2.7; 14.64; Rom. 2.24; etc.
  5. So C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John* (London: SPCK, 1955), p. 294.



occasion committed the unforgivable sin; indeed, he argues with them on a rational basis (Mk. 3.23ff.) in the hope that they will see their error and repent. However, he does give a warning and the implication is that the attitude of the scribes toward him is perilously close to this sin.

It seems reasonable to infer from this passage that the reason why this sin is unforgivable is not that God refuses to grant pardon but that those who commit this sin do not wish forgiveness, or more accurately, do not see the need of it.<sup>1</sup>

The finality of this saying seems severe. Mark states that the blasphemer does not have forgiveness εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, ἀλλὰ ἐνοχός ἐστιν αἰωνίου ἁμαρτήματος (vs. 29). This may be hyperbole,<sup>2</sup> but the numerous Old Testament and Jewish parallels<sup>3</sup> lead to the conclusion that Jesus is giving realistic, sober warning of the dire consequences of persistence in this kind of blasphemy. To refuse consistently to acknowledge that the Spirit of God is at work in Jesus is to incur the possibility of

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1. See H. R. Mackintosh, The Christian Experience of Forgiveness (London: Nisbet & Co., 1927), p. 59. This refusal is more sharply emphasized in Matthew's doublet, 9.32-34.
  2. As McNeile, Matthew, p. 179, thinks.
  3. See Num. 15.30f.; I Sam. 3.14; Is. 22.14; cf. 63.10. For Rabbinic parallels, see Montefiore, The Synoptic . . ., II, 195f.; G. Dalman, The Words of Jesus (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, p. 147.

becoming incapable of repentance and insensitive to the need for it.<sup>1</sup>

Summary:

1. All sins are forgivable except blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.
2. Jesus appears to have spoken this warning to his critics who deliberately attributed his exorcism of demons to the power of evil.
3. Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, consequently, consists in ascribing to evil forces the work of God in Jesus.
4. It is unforgivable eternally because persistence in it will, presumably, destroy the will to repent, i.e., the need of forgiveness will not be recognized.

The Statement about Parables

(Mk. 4.10-12 and parallels)

The third explicit statement about divine forgiveness in Mark reads:

And when he was alone, those who were about him with the twelve asked him concerning the parables. (11) And he said to them, 'To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables; (12) so that they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand; lest they should turn again, and be forgiven.'

4.10-12

Two questions must be asked: 1. What is the source of this final phrase,  $\acute{\alpha}\phi\epsilon\theta\eta\ \alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\iota\varsigma$  ? What is the probable meaning of the passage?

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1. Herbert, ThWBB, 32, writes, " . . . so those who persistently refuse to listen to God's voice, and harden their hearts, will lose the power to listen, having become insensitive."

### The Origin of the Final Phrase

When some of the disciples of Jesus ask him concerning the parables, he answers as noted above. It is immediately recognized that in this answer Mark reports Jesus' making use of Isaiah 6.9-10. It is a free paraphrase which follows neither the Hebrew, nor the LXX but the Aramaic Targum.<sup>1</sup> One of the points of agreement between Mark and the Targum is seen in the fact that the verb "forgive" has been substituted in them for the verb "heal" (ܠܫܝܬܪ) found in the Hebrew of Isaiah 6.10b. This rendering, "be forgiven" is almost certainly an intentional interpretation of the Isaianic word by the Aramaic translator.<sup>2</sup> In the Old Testament ܠܫܝܬܪ is often used to mean or to include the sense of God's forgiveness of sins, and, no doubt, it includes this meaning in Isaiah 6.10b.<sup>3</sup>

### The Meaning of the Passage

The context of this statement about parables is the same in all the Synoptic Gospels. It connects the Parable of the Sower (4.3-9) with its interpretation in vss. 13-20. Mark makes no attempt to fit vss. 10-12 into the exact situation: (1) The crowds and the boat of vss. 1 and 36 are gone; (2) the audience

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1. This has been clearly shown by T. W. Manson, The Teaching . . ., pp. 75ff.; so also Jeremias, The Parables . . ., pp. 12f.
  2. So Black, An Aramaic . . ., p. 156; he notes that the Targum does this same thing again in Is. 53.5 and 57.18.
  3. Examples of ܠܫܝܬܪ with this meaning are cited in footnote 4 p. 19.

has narrowed to *ὅτι περὶ αὐτὸν οὖν τοῖς δώδεκα* ;  
 (3) the question concerns "parables" (plural) whereas only one  
 had been told, and vs. 13 returns to that particular one; (4)  
 Mark employs his typical link-phrase, *καὶ ἔλεγεν αὐτοῖς*.  
 Thus, it is quite possible that Mark has inserted this saying  
 at this point.<sup>1</sup> Of course, this does not prejudice the decision  
 about its genuineness as a saying of Jesus.

In verse 11 a contrast is drawn between the inner group  
 of interested questioners (disciples) and those outside (*τοῖς*  
*ἔξω* ), i.e. the non-believers. To the former God has  
 given<sup>2</sup> the "mystery of the kingdom." This *μυστήριον* is the  
 being-revealed secret<sup>3</sup> of the contemporary irruption of the  
 kingdom of God in the word and work of Jesus.<sup>4</sup> To those outside,  
 all things are in *παραβολαῖς* . The word "parables" in this  
 context, apparently, refers to sayings that are easily seen on

1. So Jeremias, *The Parables . . .* , p. 11; Taylor, *Mark*, pp. 254f.

2. *Δέδοται* in the passive is a circumlocution for God's  
 action. See Jeremias, *The Parables . . .* , p. 13, note 19.

3. This idea of a gradual revelation depending on readiness to  
 "hear" recurs often in this same chapter: see vss. 9, 22, 33,  
 34. Cf. Rom. 16.25.

4. So Jeremias, *The Parables . . .* , pp. 13, 16; Taylor, *Mark*,  
 p. 255; E. Hoskyns and F. N. Davey, *The Riddle of the New*  
*Testament* (3d ed.; London: Faber & Faber, 1947), pp. 188f.;  
 O. E. B. Cranfield, "St. Mark 4.1-34," *SJT*, 5 (1952), 53;  
 Friedrich Hauch, "*παραβολή*," *KThWNT*, V, 754.



their surface (vs. 12a) but may be enigmatic as to their intended meaning.<sup>1</sup> The extent to which this idea of "concealment" or "veiling" of the truth is intended is not definite.

In verse 12 the Targum paraphrase of Isaiah is partially quoted as the intended reason for using parables. To "those outside everything is in parables; so that (  $\epsilon\upsilon\alpha$  ) they may indeed see but not perceive . . . lest (  $\mu\eta\pi\omicron\tau\epsilon$  ) they should turn again and be forgiven." This verse is the pivot-point of the interpretation of the passage. The apparent meaning is that parables are used in order to prevent repentance and to preclude forgiveness. Consequently, this passage has been much discussed.

Some critics have conjectured that both vss. 11 and 12 constitute a later community saying. In view of Israel's hardening against Jesus or in view of the obscurity of some parables at a later time, the Christian community reasoned that Jesus intended it that way.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, many hold this to reflect a genuine saying of Jesus and give various explanations

1. Jeremias, The Parables . . ., p. 13, emphasizing the meaning "riddle" or "dark saying"; but see Taylor, Mark, p. 256. For a discussion of mashal (parable) and hidah (riddle) see B.T.D. Smith, The Parables of the Synoptic Gospels (Cambridge: University Press, 1937), pp. 3-15.
2. See Bultmann, Die Geschichte . . ., p. 351; Ergaenzungsheft (1958) for p. 351; Rawlinson, Mark, p. 48; Menzies, The Earliest . . ., p. 109; Branscomb, Mark, p. 80; Dibelius, From Tradition . . ., pp. 227f.; C. H. Dodd, The Parables of the Kingdom (rev.; London: Nisbet & Co., 1936), pp. 13ff.; Smith, The Parables . . ., pp. 28f. See other authorities listed by Hauck, KThWNT, V, 754, note 98. Black, An Aramaic . . ., pp. 153ff., holds a yet different opinion. He also assumes that the parables were not intended to prevent repentance, but he holds that the force of Mark's (  $\epsilon\upsilon\alpha$  . . .  $\mu\eta\pi\omicron\tau\epsilon$  ) cannot be extenuated. Mark has changed Jesus' original intention. His wording is based on an authentic saying of

for it. Generally, it has been assumed that, in accordance with the contiguous Parables of the Sower (4.3ff.) and the Lamp (4.21f.) and Jesus' attitude elsewhere, his purpose was, ultimately to reveal--not to conceal--the "secret of the kingdom." This does not deny the possibility of a gradual revelation, but it insists that ultimately he came "to seek and to save," not to prevent salvation.<sup>1</sup> Such an assumption is further justified when it is noted that both Matthew and Luke have partially diminished the force of Mark's wording.<sup>2</sup>

If it is assumed that Jesus sought to save and not to prevent repentance, what is the explanation of harsh telic force of the "ὅτι . . . μήποτε"? Many scholars would temper the saying in some way.<sup>3</sup> The following examples may be given:

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Jesus, but he has intentionally adapted and interpreted the quotation being influenced by "later reflective and perhaps Hellenistic attitude toward the Jews" (p. 156). Black concludes (from the whole Targum passage and from the Q saying attached by Matthew in 13.13) that Jesus' original saying was primarily a contrast between "the crowds without, who, while they see and hear, neither perceive nor understand, and the disciples, those within, who see with their eyes and understand, and are blessed on that account" (p. 157).

1. So Hauck, KThWNT, V, 753.
2. Matthew changes Mark's ὅτι to ὅτι (13.13); this makes parabolic teaching an accommodation to the dull perception of those outside. Luke keeps the (8.10), but he abbreviates by omitting the μήποτε clause, and thus mitigates the force of the Isaiah quotation. Franz Hesse, "Das Verstockungsproblem im Alten Testament," Beihefte zur ZAW, 74 (1955), 60ff., points out that in the Old Testament the later prophets who referred to Is. 6.10 usually softened its harshness also.
3. Torrance, SJT, Vol. 3, 303ff., holds that to score out this ὅτι is to score out the urgency of the Gospel. Jesus deliberately veiled his revelation in gentleness; he did not

(1) The result of Jesus' teaching, just as that of Isaiah, has here been ironically stated to be the purpose of it.<sup>1</sup>

(2) Mark has mistranslated the ambiguous Aramaic particle in his quotation from the Targum in vs. 12. This de may be translated either by o' (a relative clause) or by va (a final clause). The relative clause should be read here, since Mark has carefully omitted the harsh words of Is. 6.10a. Thus, Jesus' meaning was that parables were not meant to harden hearts, but the hardness of heart of the hearers defeated the purpose of parables.<sup>2</sup>

(3) Mark mistranslates the Aramaic particle, mentioned above; it should be translated, as Matthew has done, with o't = "because." Thus Jesus teaches in parables to accommodate his revelation to the dullness of people, i.e. they are not yet ready (cf. vs. 33) for plain language.<sup>3</sup>

wish to overwhelm the hearers, to compel faith or confirm disbelief. Rather he wished to woo, to give time and room for repentance and faith. The va is kept by Torrance, but the harshness of permanent concealment is removed by the idea of gradual revelation.

1. So Gould, Mark, pp. 72ff. Other Old Testament examples of this are cited by McNeile, Matthew, p. 192.
2. So T. W. Manson, The Teaching . . ., pp. 75ff.; Hunter, Mark, p. 55.
3. So W. C. Allen, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to S. Matthew ("I.C.C."; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1907), p. 80. Regarding the ambiguity of the Aramaic particle see Black, An Aramaic . . ., pp. 52ff.



(4) Though it is appropriate here, Mark has inserted this passage from another connection. He was misled by the word *παράβολας* which here should be translated "riddles." *ἵνα* = *ἵνα πληρωθῇ*; the intent is that the saying of Isaiah might be fulfilled. *Μήποτε* translates the Aramaic *dil<sup>o</sup>ma* which may be translated "unless." Since rabbinical exegesis always saw Is. 6.10b as a promise (not a threat), it should be translated "unless" here. The resultant interpretation is that the secret of the kingdom of God is disclosed to disciples (i.e. believers) but all is obscure to those outside unless they recognize the person and mission of Jesus and repent. If they do, they will know the forgiving mercy of God.<sup>1</sup>

(5) Mark's wording is to be accepted as it is; the explanation is found in his stress. His emphasis is on the fact that something is positively seen and heard: "in order that they may indeed see . . . indeed hear . . . ." (The main verb behind these is emphasized by an Infinitive Absolute). The final phrases may be subordinated: " . . . that they may indeed see, though they do not perceive . . . ." (The paratactic structure of the Semitic languages allows this in translation). The *μήποτε* clause is connected to the accentuated verbs to yield: "that they may indeed see . . . indeed hear . . . in case they yet turn and are forgiven." The resulting interpretation is that Jesus taught particularly in parables (stories from natural

1. So Jeremias, *The Parables . . .*, pp. 11ff.; see Strack-Bill., I, 622f., for the Rabbinical exegesis of Is. 6.10b.



settings) so that people would definitely see and hear something which might lodge with them to keep open the possibility of repentance and forgiveness.<sup>1</sup>

Other scholars<sup>2</sup> would keep the full telic force of the saying, just as it is probably to be taken in Is. 6.9f. They would suggest that Jesus is here represented by Mark as recognizing, just as did Isaiah, the painful truth that his mission was to bring judgment, to force decision and therefore a division among his hearers. Those outside (οἱ ἔξω) who do not recognize in faith and respond to the working of God in Jesus ultimately find it impossible to respond and be forgiven.

Conclusion: It may be concluded that Jesus does not desire to prevent repentance,<sup>3</sup> indeed, to evoke repentance may be stated as one of the purposes of parables. But this passage probably affirms that the teaching and mission of Jesus met hardened and unreceptive minds. Jesus was, apparently, well aware of the division which his parables caused; indeed, it is

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1. So Wm. Manson, "The Purpose of Parables: A Re-Examination of Mark iv.10-12," ET, LXVIII, 5 (Feb. 1957), 132ff.

2. Hauck, KThWNT, V, 754f.

3. Lohmeyer, Markus, p. 84, writes, "Eine 'Verstockungstheorie' hat also in dem (✓) keine Anhalt; vielmehr fordert das Zitat, dass 'die Draussen,' die zugleich sehen und nicht sehen, aus solcher unentschiedenen Existenz sich durch die Tat der Umkehr befreien und durch die Gabe der 'Vergebung' zu solchen 'um Ihn' werden."

reported that he frequently uttered the caution: "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." To those who had been humbled and who had recognized the words and works of God in Jesus the parables became an encouragement to deeper faith and understanding. The difficult truth, as Isaiah had seen, is that those who remained insensitive to the divine word and unrepentant in the presence of Jesus found their attitude aggravated by his parables (cf. Jn. 9.39-41).<sup>1</sup> Matthew emphasizes this by his insertion (13.12) into this passage: "For to him who has will more be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away."

#### Summary:

1. Though the apparent meaning is otherwise, it seems certain from the context that Jesus does not desire that any be prevented from repentance and forgiveness by his parables.
2. In these special verses, which are difficult to interpret, Jesus either (a) explains how he seeks to awaken faith for the bestowal of forgiveness, or (b) recognizes the division his ministry causes and hints that it is due to the fact that the "outsiders" have not repented toward him and received forgiveness, or (c) declares it to be his purpose to bring judgment--to evoke a decision and a division among his hearers. Those outside who reject the word of God are shut out from repentance and forgiveness.

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1. A. G. Hebert, "Parables," ThWBB, p. 162, notes, "Running through the Bible there is the mystery of rejection; in each generation there is unbelief and rebelliousness, side by side with faith and receptiveness."

# Forgive That You May Be Forgiven

(Mk. 11.25 and parallel)

In Mark the final explicit saying about God's forgiveness is found in 11.25:

And whenever you stand praying, forgive (ἀφίετε), if you have anything against any one; so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive (ἀφή) you your trespasses.

This saying is paralleled only in Matt. 6.14 where the negative is added in vs. 15:<sup>1</sup>

For if you forgive (ἀφίετε) men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive (ἀφήσει) you; (15) but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

## The Context

The first notable fact about these parallel statements is that they occur in different contexts. Mark places the saying after the fig tree episode and the short saying about trust in the power of prayer (11.24). Matthew inserts it immediately after the Lord's Prayer as a commentary on it. Different opinions

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1. The parallel to this verse in Mk. 11.26 is rightly omitted by most modern English translations. Though several important uncials contain this addition (A,C,D), others which are as important and older (X, B,W) omit it. Its occurrence in the former MSS is, no doubt, due to a later scribal insertion to bring Mark into conformity with Matthew on this point. The omission does not change the sense, since Mk. 11.25 by itself conveys the meaning which the variant seeks to emphasize.



are held as to which context<sup>1</sup> and form of wording<sup>2</sup> are the original ones.

### The Meaning of the Saying

Both forms of the saying are placed in connection with prayer. The apparent meaning is simply that God's forgiveness of the one praying is conditioned upon that one's forgiving other men their wrongs toward him.<sup>3</sup> This condition is a familiar one to Jewish hearers. The idea is exactly paralleled in Sir. 28.1ff. C. G. Montefiore states that it is "quite in accordance with Rabbinic teaching."<sup>4</sup> However, the Jewish scholar points out a difference in general emphasis between Jesus and the Rabbis:

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1. The insertion of the saying in Mk. 11.25 seems awkward and artificial in style and thought to Taylor, Mark, p. 465; Gould, Mark, p. 216; and others. T. H. Robinson, The Gospel of Matthew ("The Moffatt New Testament Commentary"; London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1928), p. 51, holds that Mark's context is the original one. Some explicitly say that Matthew's context is the original: Menzies, The Earliest . . ., pp. 212f.; Gould, Mark, 216.
  2. Mark's form is preferred by T. W. Manson, The Sayings . . ., p. 171; he thinks that Matthew has legalized Mark's saying. So also Bultmann, Die Geschichte . . ., p. 140; Robinson, Matthew, p. 51. W. L. Knox, The Sources of the Synoptic Gospels, ed. H. Chadwick (Cambridge: University Press, 1957), II, 26, prefers Matthew's form because it preserves the parallelism.
  3. Mark uses the present imperative with a  $\epsilon\upsilon\alpha$ -subjunctive clause of purpose: ". . . forgive . . . in order that your Father may forgive you . . ." (vs. 25). Matthew employs a "more probable future condition" with the contraction,  $\epsilon\delta\upsilon$ , and the subjunctive ( $\alpha\phi\eta\tau\epsilon$ ) in the protasis and the future indicative ( $\alpha\phi\eta\sigma\epsilon\iota$ ) in the apodosis: ". . . if you forgive (others) . . . your Father will forgive (you) . . ."
  4. The Synoptic . . ., II, 105. Numerous examples are cited by Strack-Bill., I, 424f.



"It is, perhaps, true that the Rabbis thought more of the doer than of the recipient of the wrong. They were, perhaps, more keen to teach that the doer of a wrong should beg pardon and seek reconciliation than that the recipient should forgive."<sup>1</sup>

It may be assumed that neither the Rabbis nor Jesus would exclude the emphasis of the other. Indeed, Jesus explicitly mentions their emphasis in his saying about bringing gifts to the altar in Matt. 5.23ff.; but it is important to note that he usually emphasized that the wronged party must forgive (Matt. 18.21-22, 35; Lk. 17.3f.).

It must be asked whether this saying can be taken alone as an independent, propositional truth which Jesus proclaimed to men generally. Does the saying mean that God's forgiveness to all men is first and last conditional upon their forgiving attitude toward their own offenders?<sup>2</sup> It may be seriously doubted whether Jesus meant the saying to be interpreted in this way. Several important factors point to this conclusion: the speaker, the hearers, and the object of the forgiveness. Christ is, of course, the speaker, and it is to the disciples that these

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1. Montefiore, The Beginnings . . ., ed. Foakes-Jackson and Lake, I, 77. The quotations in Strack-Bill., I, 424f., bear this out.
  2. Redlich, The Forgiveness . . ., writes with the express purpose of clarifying and setting forth this idea (see p. ix). In Redlich's thesis the condition, apparently, holds true for God's initial forgiving mercy and for post-conversion living; at least, no distinction is made. Archbishop Temple writes the Foreword and points out that Canon Redlich is not as opposed to Pelagianism as he (Temple) would like a theologian to be.

words are spoken.<sup>1</sup> It is to men who had already received the call and companionship of Jesus (i.e. assurance of God's forgiveness and love through him) that these words of a conditional forgiveness are spoken. The situation is parallel to that of the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant (Matt. 18.23-35). Christ charges his own chosen and beloved disciples that they must henceforth forgive to receive forgiveness for their particular offenses. This is quite different from requiring the spirit of forgiving-ness as a prior condition of divine pardon for all men. The inference may be fairly drawn that only those who have, first, received and known God's love in Jesus are able fully to show forgiveness to others and therefore to receive such a stern charge from his lips. "You received without pay, give without pay" (Matt. 10.8b).

Summary:

1. Jesus is here speaking to disciples who had received through him assurance of God's love and forgiveness.
2. On the basis of this fact, he charges them that in praying for God's forgiveness they must forgive those who have wronged them.
3. The implication of Mark (made explicit by Matt.) is that failure to forgive others will revoke God's forgiveness to the petitioner.

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1. So T. W. Manson, The Teaching . . ., pp. 97f. Mk. 11.25 is specifically addressed to the disciples. Matt. 6.14f. is a part of the Sermon on the Mount collection and therefore cannot be definitely placed. However, the parallel idea in Matt. 18.35 is spoken only to the disciples as is the Lord's Prayer in Luke.

The Lord's Prayer Petition for Forgiveness

(Matt. 6.12 // Lk. 11.4)

A familiar passage concerning forgiveness is that found in the fifth petition of the Lord's Prayer:

And forgive us our debts,  
As we also have forgiven our debtors;  
Matt. 6.12

. . . and forgive us our sins, for we, ourselves  
forgive everyone who is indebted to us.  
Lk. 11.4

Though the substance of the whole prayer is common to both Matthew and Luke, their textual differences suggest that each author took the wording from his own peculiar source rather than from Q.<sup>1</sup>

Those Who Pray this Prayer are Disciples<sup>2</sup>

At their request for teaching about prayer in Lk. 11.1 Jesus begins "Our Father . . . ." These words assume that the disciples are in community with God and with each other. Throughout the prayer it is notable that in this community there is a

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1. So Streeter, The Four . . ., pp. 276f.; T. W. Manson, The Sayings . . ., p. 167. On this supposition the additions to Luke in some MSS are explainable; they are due to later assimilation to Matthew. If the prayer comes from Q the large omissions from the important MSS of Luke are unexplainable. It is, however, possible that Luke represents Q and that Matthew has brought in the additions.
  2. So C. W. Votaw, "Sermon on the Mount," HDB, Ext. 37; Gerhard Bindemann, Das Gebet um taeglich Vergebung der Suenden in der Heilsverkuendigung Jesu und in den Briefen des Apostels Paulus (Guetersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1902), p. 16; E. Lohmeyer, Das Vater-Unser (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1946), pp. 129ff.



mutual dependence of freedom and subjection;<sup>1</sup> it is seen in the asking for and receiving of God's forgiveness and the sharing of it with others. The fact that this is a prayer also suggests a teaching to a limited group. It would not lend itself to "popular" preaching.

"Forgive us our debts (sins)"

In the first part of the petition the only difference between Matthew and Luke lies between "debts" (ὀφειλήματα) and "sins" (ἁμαρτίας). It is generally agreed that Matthew is closer to the probable Aramaic original (ܠܝܠܝܢ); Luke's use of "sins," however, is a possible translation and correct interpretation of "debts" in this context.<sup>2</sup> The use of "debts" in the religious sense emphasizes the personal relationship between God and the disciples. They are indebted to God because they have received much from him.<sup>3</sup> The metaphor presupposes that God has made his people a "loan" or given them a "stewardship" for which they have to render an account.<sup>4</sup> It is never said of what the "loan" consists. E. Lohmeyer is, no doubt, correct in inter-

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1. See Lohmeyer, Das Vater . . . , p. 132.

2. So Dalman, The Words . . . , p. 281; Plummer, Luke, p. 297; T. W. Manson, The Sayings . . . , p. 170; Black, An Aramaic . . . , p. 102.

3. This same idea of grateful "indebtedness" is seen in Rom. 15.26f.

4. This same metaphor is recurrent in the gospels: cf. Matt. 18.23ff.; 25.14ff. and parallel; Lk. 16.1ff.



pretending it to consist of all that man is and has by way of God's creation, preservation and community with Himself.<sup>1</sup>

This part of the prayer makes several contributions to the study of divine forgiveness.

(a) The disciples are taught to pray for God's forgiveness. Carrying on the tradition kept, according to the Pentateuch, from Moses (Ex. 34.9) down through the Synagogue of contemporary times,<sup>2</sup> Jesus taught his disciples to pray for forgiveness. There is a close connection (καὶ) between this petition and the fourth which requests "our daily bread." Lohmeyer writes that

Die gleiche Duerftigkeit und Beduerftigkeit, welche dort den Leib des Menschen bedrueckte, plagt hier das Herz des Menschen. Wie dieser nicht ohne das Brot lebt, das ihm Gott heute spendet, so lebt das Herz nicht ohne die Vergebung, die Gott allein ihm geben kann . . . Der Beter bedarf deshalb keines besonderen Grundes zu solcher Bitte; wie es zum Kinde gehoert, den Vater um das Brot zu bitten, das sein Leben naehrt so gehoert es auch dazu, ihn um Vergebung zu bitten, welche, 'unsere Schulden tilgt.'<sup>3</sup>

(b) The prayer acknowledges the petitioners' complete inability to repay their indebtedness. The verb ἀφίημι carries the meaning of complete remission of the debt. There is no hope here of repaying part of it, that is, of partially justifying themselves before God; the life of the disciple in relation to God appears to be always dependent upon his thoroughgoing forgiveness.

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1. Das Vater. . ., p. 118.
  2. See p. 71 above.
  3. Das Vater . . ., p. 124.

(c) The forgiveness sought is for the removal of hindrances to the communion with God already established. As noted previously, the metaphor of "indebtedness" presupposes the idea of community between the forgiver and the debtor. Thus, the forgiveness sought is not simply for the "debts" as such but for the "debts" as they disturb that community. It is for the removal of the hindrances erected by man which cloud the truth and reality of the community with God. To Jesus these sins never created a permanent breach between the petitioners and God for the prayer begins, "Our Father . . . ."

"As we also have forgiven our debtors"

The connecting phrase between the two parts of this fifth petition is ambiguous and has provoked much discussion. Matthew binds the two parts with *ὡς καὶ* ("as we also have forgiven . . . .") and Luke more loosely with *καὶ ἡμεῖς*<sup>1</sup> ("for we also forgive . . . ."). The question arises: Does the latter part speak of (a) a strict condition to be fulfilled in order that God can forgive, or (b) a promise that upon God's forgiveness the petitioners will forgive others in the future, or (c) an added clause with a connection to be otherwise determined? Most interpreters, with varying qualifications, support the first of these possibilities, i.e. God's pardoning of the disciples is here conditioned upon

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1. The textual variations from this reading are probably assimilations to Matthew.

their pardoning those who have wronged them.<sup>1</sup> They would be quick to add that there is no proportional relationship between the two; God forgives far more than the petitioners do.<sup>2</sup>

Other interpreters maintain that there is no condition implied here. Rather, the second part of the petition either (a) promises to forgive others in the future,<sup>3</sup> or (b) gives an illustration--the Sabbatical Year--of the kind of forgiveness requested from God,<sup>4</sup> or (c) simply represents a spontaneous addition of childlike faith.<sup>5</sup> The first necessitates a change

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1. So Bindemann, Das Gebet um . . ., p. 23; Robinson, Matthew, p. 52; Wm. Manson, Luke, p. 135; Montefiore, The Synoptic . . ., II, 102f., 473; T. W. Manson, The Sayings . . ., p. 170; Taylor, Forgiveness . . ., pp. 14f.; J. Calvin, Institutes, III, xx, 45; H. B. Swete, The Forgiveness of Sins (London: Macmillan & Co., 1916), p. 55; Redlich, The Forgiveness . . ., pp. 140ff.; E. Stauffer, New Testament . . ., p. 178, calls it a necessary expression of repentance.
  2. See A. Plummer, An Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to S. Matthew (London: Elliot Stock, 1909), p. 102.
  3. So F. H. Chase, The Lord's Prayer in the Early Church (Cambridge: University Press, 1891), 56. Since the Old Syriac Version has the future translation of *ἡμεῖς* in both Matthew and Luke, he holds the future to be the original. "The whole petition becomes thus a prayer and a promise, a prayer for forgiveness, and a promise that the suppliant will forgive."
  4. So Jas. W. Thirtle, The Lord's Prayer: An Interpretation Critical and Expository (London: Morgan and Scott, 1915), pp. 136, 259f. Cf. James Denney, The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1919), pp. 133f., who also suggests that the "as we forgive" is illustrative.
  5. So A. B. Bruce, Exp. Grk. Test., I, 122; Lohmeyer, Das Vater . . ., pp. 126ff.

in the tense of Matthew's verb which is improbable in the light of the aorist tense being used in the rest of the prayer. The second suggestion is attractive. The idea is that Jesus used the traditional "Lord's release" as an illustration of the kind of forgiveness that the petitioners are to seek from God. The sabbatical year is described in some detail in Deut. 15.1-11.<sup>1</sup> In that year all Israelite creditors were commanded to give their debtors a release (LXX: ῥῆσις, vss. 1,2,3,9). This was probably a complete<sup>2</sup> (rather than temporary<sup>3</sup>) cancelling of debts. There is testimony that this tradition was preserved in some form down to New Testament times.<sup>4</sup> If so, the practice provided Jesus with an illustration of the kind of forgiveness the disciple is to ask of God. Thus, he taught them to pray: "We are in debt to thee; forgive us as we by thy command have released our debtors each sabbatical year."

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1. This year of release (LXX, ῥῆσις) for debtors has roots in Ex. 23.10f. where a year's rest is decreed for the land and for benefit of the poor. It is also related to the rather idealistic year of jubilee (LXX, ῥῆσις; Lev. 25.8-55) when property is restored to its original occupants, the land rests for a year and slaves are released.
  2. With G. E. Wright, "Deuteronomy," Inter. Bible, II, 428.
  3. See the discussion by S. R. Driver, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Deuteronomy ("ICC"; 3rd ed; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1902), pp. 178ff.
  4. The practice is referred to in I Macc. 6.51,53; Josephus Antiquities, xiv, 16,2; Sanhedrin, 5.1. These citations only explicitly refer to the rest given to the land and not to the release of debts.



The third interpretation is also possible. Lohmeyer argues that the probable Aramaic behind Matthew's *ὥς καὶ . . . ἀφῆκαμεν* and Luke's *καὶ γὰρ . . . ἀφίόμεν* is indefinite and allows several possibilities in translation.<sup>1</sup> He concludes that only the content of the two parts can determine their connection. He takes this connection to be simply a logical one, not a strict condition. In view of the close community between God and the disciples which the prayer and the debtor-creditor metaphor assume Lohmeyer suggests that the forgiveness of the disciples to their debtors is but a reflection of the Father's love and forgiveness.<sup>2</sup> Rather than being a condition of the Father's forgiveness it is a natural and spontaneous concomitant of it.

These explanations are helpful; there seems to be no indisputable answer. The very vagueness of the petition may be part of its genius, since it allows more than one interpretation. The idea of a strict condition may or may not be present, but the prayer certainly contains the reminder to the disciples of their duty to forgive.

#### Summary:

1. The "Lord's Prayer" is given by Jesus to his disciples.
2. They are instructed to pray for the forgiveness of their sins.

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1. Das Vater . . ., pp. 126f.

2. Ibid., pp. 127f.

3. The prayer acknowledges their total dependence upon divine pardon.

4. The forgiveness they seek is for cancellation of those sins which disturb and prevent realization of the communion with God which the disciples already enjoyed.

5. The phrase "as we have forgiven our debtors" may or may not be a strict condition. At least, the disciples acknowledge that their forgiveness to their fellows is an outgrowth and an expected concomitant of God's forgiveness to them.

### "Forgive and You Will Be Forgiven"

Luke 6.37

In Luke's "Sermon on the Plain" (6.20-49) there is another statement of Jesus which closely connects "human" and "divine" forgiveness:

Judge not, and you will not be judged;  
condemn not, and you will not be condemned;  
forgive, and you will be forgiven (ἀπολύετε, καὶ ἀπολυθήσεσθε);  
(38) give, and it will be given to you; . . . (6.37-38)

This verse comes from Q,<sup>1</sup> and is probably closer to the original than the corresponding passage in Matt. 7.1-2.<sup>2</sup> The word ἀπολύω occurs often in the New Testament with the meanings "to divorce," "to let go (or) dismiss" or "to set free, release," but apart from this passage it is never used in the sense of pardoning offenders. In Lk. 13.12 a woman is released from her infirmity; in Mt. 18.27 a debtor is released from arrest and his debt forgiven.<sup>3</sup> In II Macc. 12.45 Judas makes a sin-offering for some of his apostate

1. So Streeter, The Four . . ., p. 251; Wm. Manson, Luke, p. 63.

2. So T. W. Manson, The Sayings . . ., p. 55.

3. See Jeremias, The Parables . . ., p. 146.

soldiers, who had been killed, in order that they might be re-  
leased from their sin (Τῆς ἀμαρτίας ἀπολύεσθαι) in the  
 resurrection. It may, therefore, be said that though Luke's use  
 of the word here to mean one's pardon to his offenders is not a  
 common use, it is quite possible.

From the context of this passage several observations may  
 be made. (1) The sermon on the "level place" is directed to  
 Jesus' disciples (vs. 20; cf. Mt. 5.1) though others were probably  
 present (vs. 17). (2) The purport of the preceding passage is  
 that the disciples are to love their enemies and do good to the  
 undeserving (vss. 27-35a) simply because in doing so they will be  
 accepted as sons of God, who, himself, leads the way in being  
 kind to those who do not deserve it (vss. 35b-36). (3) Verses 37  
 and 38 continue this same theme; they give particular application<sup>1</sup>  
 of the principle of love in terms of the courts and market place:  
 "Judge not . . . condemn not . . . forgive . . . give . . . ."  
 In each case the passive voice is attached as a typical Hebrew  
 evasive mode of referring to God.<sup>2</sup> The significance is: "forgive  
 and God will forgive you."

This passage is another indication of the natural connec-  
 tion in the teaching of Jesus between divine and human forgiveness.  
 "Forgive and (καὶ) you will be forgiven." A command for the

1. See T. W. Manson, The Sayings . . ., p. 56.

2. So Dalman, The Words . . ., pp. 224ff.

present is coupled with a definite promise for the future. This same connection is made, as pointed out previously, in the Apocrypha (Sirach 28.2) and Pseudepigrapha (Test. of the Twelve, Zeb. 8.1-3) and in several Rabbinical sayings.<sup>1</sup>

In the context Jesus has given a twofold motivation behind his command: (1) he points to God's present mercy in the preceding verses (" . . . for he is kind to the ungrateful and the selfish. Be merciful even as your Father is merciful."), and (2) he implies a future judgment before God. The affirmation of God's present mercy in the former is made real in the friendship of God's Messiah who was with these disciples and from whom they received this command. The expectancy of a future judgment in the second motivation is a reality in the teaching of Jesus. The implication of ἀπολοθήσεσθε is that unless they forgive each other they will not retain God's forgiveness. It is impossible to infer that Jesus here or in vs. 38b envisaged a bargain between the disciples and God, so that God would return them "tit for tat"; the declaration of God's mercy to the unworthy in verse 35c eliminates that. Rather Jesus recognizes that God's gifts remain only with those "through whom they can find an outlet to others."<sup>2</sup> For disciples to close their hearts to their offenders is ultimately for them to

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1. See Strack-Bill., II, 160.

2. Wm. Manson, Luke, p. 71.



shut their hearts against God's love; such action signifies that they have begun to set God's forgiveness to them at small account.<sup>1</sup> It was precisely this that was done by the unmerciful servant in Matt. 18.28ff.

#### Summary:

1. Jesus teaches that God, himself, is merciful to the undeserving and rewards with sonship those who act likewise.

2. Consequently, Jesus commands his disciples to forgive others their offenses.

3. If they obey, they are promised God's pardon in the future. If they do not, Jesus implies, God's pardon will not be forthcoming, i.e. they will not retain the forgiveness they probably already knew.

#### Forgiveness to the Brother

(Matt. 18.21-22 and parallel)

Then Peter came up and said to him, 'Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive (ἀφῶ ) him? As many as seven times?' (22) Jesus said to him, 'I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven.'  
Matt. 18.21f.

'Take heed to yourselves; if your brother sins, rebuke him; (4) and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, and says, 'I repent,' you must forgive (ἀφέσεις ) him.'

Lk. 17.3f.

These two passages probably have the same historical origin;<sup>2</sup> certainly their teaching is so closely parallel that they may be

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1. So T. W. Manson, The Sayings . . ., p. 56.

2. The difference between Matthew and Luke is probably due to Matthew's preferring to follow M and Luke's preferring to follow Q. See Streeter, The Four . . ., pp. 281f. Bultmann, Die Geschichte . . ., p. 151, suggests that the older wording is probably found in Luke.

studied together. Their original context is difficult to determine. Luke's context reveals no close inner connection. However, there is a connection of subject matter in Matthew. The saying is preceded by regulations about the reprimanding of offending brothers (18.15ff.)<sup>1</sup> and is followed by the parable of the Unmerciful Servant (vss. 23-35). The whole section (vss. 15-35) is concerned with the disciples' duties to one another. There are indications that they were not originally connected,<sup>2</sup> but Matthew has appropriately grouped them.

The clear teaching of both passages is that there is to be no limit to the forgiveness which the disciples are to show to their brothers who offend them. Matthew emphasizes this limitlessness by the use of "seventy times seven"<sup>3</sup> and Luke does so by using the imperative future, "you must forgive."

R. H. Charles<sup>4</sup> notes that the Testament of Gad 6.3-7 presents a remarkably fine exhortation regarding forgiveness to one's offenders and of abandonment of vengeance to God. He suggests that this passage forms a bridge from the recurrent vengeful attitudes in the Old Testament to the unequivocal teaching of the New, and he suggests that Jesus might well have been familiar with

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1. This section may contain community regulations of a later time. See Knox, The Sources . . ., II, 133.
  2. See Jeremias, The Parables . . ., p. 75.
  3. See McNeille, Matthew, p. 268, who discusses the possible readings. The significance of the figure is the same in any case; occasions of forgiveness are not to be counted.
  4. The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha . . ., II, 293.

it.<sup>1</sup> Rabbinical teaching contains exhortations for "human" forgiveness,<sup>2</sup> though, as mentioned earlier, the rabbis were usually more keen to teach that the doer of the wrong should apologize and seek reconciliation than that the recipient should forgive.<sup>3</sup> Jesus reaffirms and sharpens the teaching that has gone before him; without any hesitation he declares that as God's forgiveness is limitless (Matt. 18.24, 27, 32) so also man's must be to his offenders (Matt. 18.22, 35). Though the passages immediately under consideration are not directly concerned with divine forgiveness, it may be inferred that Jesus would not command his disciples to do more than that which he thought God did. The attached parable emphasizes this point.

#### The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant

(Matt. 18.23-35)

The details of this parable need not be dwelt upon here. It tells of an Eastern king who wished to settle accounts with his higher officials. One of them owed the king a sum so large (μυρίων ταλάντων) that he could not repay it, and, indeed, it

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1. Ibid.

2. See Montefiore, The Beginnings . . ., ed. Foakes-Jackson and Lake, I, 77ff. Strack-Bill., I, 795, deny the contention of some scholars that Pharisaic teaching required only a three-fold forgiveness to offenders. The possible limitation of Joma 86b and 87a is more apparent than real; the passage is ambiguous and is not verified elsewhere.

3. So Montefiore, The Beginnings . . ., ed. Foakes-Jackson and Lake, I, 77ff.

would probably be impossible for him ever to repay it.<sup>1</sup> The king orders that the official, his family and goods be sold. But the official, falling down before the king, begs for mercy and promises to repay all--a promise he could never fulfill. The king makes a surprising move. He takes pity on the man, releases him (ἀπέλυσεν) and completely erases (ἄφῃκεν) the whole debt. Now free and out of debt, this same official later comes upon one who is in debt to him for a trivial amount. Relative to his own cancelled debt it was a pittance. The former scene before the king is almost exactly repeated. The harsh demand for payment is answered with a plea for mercy and a promise to repay--a promise which could easily be kept. But this man, as a creditor, shows no mercy. Rather he takes legal action to put the small debtor into prison until he pays all. To have his own debts forgiven did not mean for this official a grateful response in kind to his small debtor but rather the opposite. He realized that all he could "squeeze out" of his debtor he could now keep for himself. The king, hearing about this selfish attitude, summons him and says, "You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you besought me; and should

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1. T. W. Manson, The Sayings . . ., p. 213, estimates the larger debt at 2,000,000 (pounds sterling) and the smaller debt at 4 (1937 evaluation). Jeremias, The Parables . . ., p. 146, points out that μυρία and τὰ πάντα are the highest magnitudes in use both in numbering and in currency.



you not have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?" In anger the huge debt was reinstated and the unforgiving servant is condemned to severe punishment (Τοῖς ἀσυνίοταῖς) until he pays (as in Matt. 25.30). In vs. 35 Jesus makes the stern application to his disciples--"So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive (ἀφῆτε) your brother from your heart."

Though it is impossible to be sure about the proper context for this parable, there is a reasonable basis for Matthew's insertion of it at this point. It is indirectly apropos of Peter's question (vs. 21). Though it does not specifically illustrate the repeated forgiveness of vs. 22, it does emphasize that the debts which the disciple has occasion to forgive his brother are trifling as compared to the one which God has forgiven him. It naturally follows from this story that it would be foolish for the disciple to count up or set a limit upon his acts of pardon.

In keeping with the other parables of Jesus this one presents a situation which challenges theological and ethical perception and demands a decision. As Matthew has placed it, it was spoken to the disciples;<sup>1</sup> it is a declarative simile about the way God deals with his own people, those who have received forgiveness. The interpretation is implicit in the parable: "behind the king we see God, behind the debtor, the man who was allowed

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1. So T. W. Manson, The Teaching . . ., p. 310; Jeremias, The Parables . . ., p. 115.

to hear the message of forgiveness."<sup>1</sup> The main thrust of the parable is that the debtor who had been forgiven such a vast sum by the king ought surely to have forgiven his fellow servant. Since he did not forgive, but actually was harshly severe, his own forgiveness was withdrawn.

There are here several contributions to the study of forgiveness. (1) The parable underlines Jesus' teaching about God's forgiving nature. The king (God), in a startling act of grace, cancels out (ἀφῆκεν) the totality of the vast debt. The nature of this forgiveness is, as usual, stated in metaphorical terms, but clearly it is the bestowal of mercy and the cancellation of sins or guilt (here indebtedness). Vincent Taylor points out that it is not conceived as full fellowship and reconciliation with God but as the removal of the barriers which prevent that fellowship.<sup>2</sup> (2) The emphasis of this parable is on the necessity of the forgiven to forgive; failure to do so means that the divine forgiveness already offered and received will not be retained. "This is a parable about the Last Judgment," concludes J. Jeremias; "it utters a warning: 'God has extended to you a merciful forgiveness beyond conceiving, but God will revoke the forgiveness of sin if you do not wholeheartedly share the forgiveness

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1. Jeremias, The Parables . . ., p. 46. The many other details of the narrative must not be pressed for interpretive or allegorical significance. They simply give life and color to the story.
  2. Forgiveness . . ., p. 16. He contends that this is the strict meaning of "forgiveness" everywhere in the New Testament.

you have experienced, but harden your heart against your brother."<sup>1</sup> This same warning occurs at the conclusion of the two other master-servant parables (Lk. 12.48b and 19.26 = Matt. 25.29). If that which is committed to the servants is not cared for and used according to the master's desire, then there will be a revocation and a judgment.

#### Summary:

1. The saying (Matt. 18.21f.) and the parable (Matt. 18.23-35) are spoken to the disciples.
2. The context is not certain, but they are appropriately joined.
3. They declare the nature and will of God:
  - a. He completely forgives the sins of his servants.
  - b. Consequently, he wills for them to forgive each other.
  - c. Their forgiving of each other must be unlimited.
  - d. If they do not obey they will not be able to retain God's forgiveness.

#### Lord's Supper Reference to Forgiveness

(Matt. 26.28)

Matthew's final explicit mention of forgiveness occurs in a familiar passage:

And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink of it, all of you; (28) for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins (εἰς ἀφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν)'. 26.27f.

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1. The Parables . . ., p. 148. So also T. W. Manson, The Sayings . . ., p. 214.

Only Matthew uses the final phrase in this connection. It is added to Mark 14.24 in some manuscripts, but this is generally regarded to be a later assimilation to Matthew. The phrase is important because it indicates that this interpretation of the sacramental cup began early to gain acceptance as being the significance of the words of Jesus. Further comment on this passage will be reserved until the discussion of the Lord's Supper (pp.233ff, infra).

#### Reading in the Nazareth Synagogue

(Lk. 4.18-19)

In the synagogue at Nazareth Jesus is given the scroll.

He opens it and reads publicly:

The spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me to preach  
good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim release (ἀφῆσιν)  
to the captives  
and recovering of sight to the blind,  
to set at liberty (ἐν ἀφέσει) those who  
are oppressed,  
to proclaim the acceptable year of the  
Lord.

Luke 4.18-19

In Luke's arrangement this Nazareth announcement is at the very opening of Jesus' Galilean ministry, immediately following the temptation narrative. It is generally agreed that Luke has "transplanted" this episode,<sup>1</sup> since it must have occurred sometime

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1. So Plummer, Luke, p. 118; Wm. Manson, Luke, pp. 40, 43; Streeter, The Four . . ., p. 220.



after Jesus had begun to be widely known.<sup>1</sup> The intention of the author is probably to let that which Jesus publicly read and spoke here be an introductory summary of his whole ministry.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the rejection of him at Nazareth anticipated the response of the Jews as a whole.<sup>3</sup>

The important Scripture reading consisted of a passage from Isaiah 61.1-2. Luke's version comes from the LXX. A comparison between verses 18-19 and Is. 61.1-2 shows that one clause<sup>4</sup> from Is. 61.1 is omitted by Luke and that one phrase from Is. 58.6 ("to set at liberty, *ἐν ἀφρέσει*, those who are oppressed") is inserted. It is possible that Luke was quoting from memory, and the familiar passage of 58.6<sup>5</sup> unconsciously influenced him with the result that it was partially added in.<sup>6</sup> The two passages supplement each other; the Servant<sup>7</sup> in 61.1-3 brings and proclaims that deliverance for which God calls in Is. 58.6-7.

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1. See, especially, ver. 23.

2. See Hoskyns and Davey, The Riddle . . ., p. 176; Wm. Manson, Luke, pp. 40f. J. M. Creed, The Gospel According to St. Luke (London: Macmillan & Co., 1930), pp. 65f., suggests that it takes the place of Mk. 1.15 in Luke's account.

3. Montefiore, The Synoptic . . ., II, 395, writes, "Nazareth anticipated Jerusalem."

4. " . . . he has sent me to bind up the broken hearted." The later MSS which insert this are probably assimilating to Isaiah. So Plummer, Luke, p. 120.

5. Luke possibly refers to it in Acts 8.23.

6. For numerous other such combined quotations see F. H. Woods, "Quotations," HDB, IV, 185b.

7. So designated by Bright, The Kingdom . . ., p. 198; Jackson and Lake, The Beginnings . . ., I, 390.

The word *ἀφεσις* occurs twice in this LXX quotation:  
 "He has sent me to proclaim *ἀφεσιν* to the captives . . . to set *ἐν ἀφέσει* those who are oppressed." The meaning in both of these may have been primarily a literal release from the political and economic oppression of the exile.<sup>1</sup> However, an eschatological release is probably included.<sup>2</sup> Jesus' use of this scripture probably refers more to forgiveness in this latter theological sense.<sup>3</sup> In the New Testament *ἀφεσις* is generally used to mean divine forgiveness and R. Bultmann is probably right in saying that it carries that meaning here.<sup>4</sup>

Jesus declared that this prophecy was fulfilled that very day (*σήμερον*) in their hearing. For this reason G. Dalman concludes that Jesus was pointing to a fact which was not meant to be an interpretation, but a fulfilment, and this fact was Himself.<sup>5</sup> If so, the passage is very significant. By recording this incident and by placing it where he does Luke appears to be indicating that the ministry of Jesus was the fulfilment "of the

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1. So J. Skinner, The Book of the Prophet Isaiah ("Cambridge Bible"; rev.; Cambridge: University Press, 1917), II, 205.
  2. So Bultmann, KThWNT, I, 507; J. P. Thornton-Duesberry, "Freedom," ThWBB, p. 87.
  3. The *πτωχός* is a clue to spiritual interpretation. The "Sermon on the Plain" (Lk. 6.20) begins with good news to these "poor." See Wm. Manson, Luke, pp. 64f.
  4. KThWNT, I, 508.
  5. Jesus-Jeshua: Studies in the Gospels (rev.; London: SPCK, 1929), p. 54.

whole panorama of God's awaited salvation."<sup>1</sup>

An important point of this passage for our study is the close connection of forgiveness with the person and work of Jesus. A second point to be noted is the fact that this release was thought to have come in the present: "Today (σήμερον) this scripture has been fulfilled (πεπλήρωται) in your hearing." In the third place, the context shows the universal outlook of Jesus; this gospel was also for the Gentiles (4.24-29). At this he is rejected by his people. The point is important to Luke; it anticipated the final rejection of Jesus by the people.

#### Summary:

1. For Luke the reading of Is. 61.1 and the claim of fulfillment in the Nazareth Synagogue appears to introduce the whole message and work of Jesus.

2. The passage seems to identify the work of forgiveness with the person and mission of Jesus.

3. The fulfillment of this promised deliverance was proclaimed to be a present reality, available to all men.

4. The rejection of Jesus here suggests the personal cost to him involved in bringing forgiveness.

#### The Woman Who Was A Sinner

(Lk. 7.36-50)

This passage tells of an occurrence in the house of Simon the Pharisee to which Jesus had been invited as a guest for a meal (vs. 36). The time and place is not stated, except that the

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1. Hoskyns and Davey, The Riddle . . ., p. 133. So also Bright, The Kingdom . . ., p. 198.

incident occurs generally during the Galilean period. While Jesus was at the table, a woman of the city who was a sinner (*ἁμαρτωλός*) unexpectedly came into the Pharisee's house. She went to the feet of Jesus and began weeping, wetting his feet with her tears, drying them with her hair and anointing them with ointment which she brought (vss. 37-38). The Pharisee is doubtful about the prophetic character of Jesus, since he has allowed a sinner to touch him (vs. 39). Consequently, Jesus tells the Parable of the Two Debtors to defend his attitude toward the woman and to evoke spiritual discernment and moral judgment from Simon (vss. 40-42). When Simon admits that much forgiveness would prompt much love (vs. 43), Jesus proceeds to point out the particular evidences of the great love which the woman had shown (vss. 44-46).<sup>1</sup> The implication is that this moving expression of affection is the result of her recognition of having been forgiven by God and of how much she needed that forgiveness (vs. 47). Publicly, Jesus assures her of the fact of her pardon (vs. 48). Finally, ignoring the wonderings of the others at the table (vs. 49), he dismisses the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace (vs. 50)."

This passage has caused much comment. Since the days of the post-apostolic fathers, it has been recognized that it bears some striking resemblances to the Anointing at Bethany in the

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1. Montefiore, The Synoptic . . ., II, 432, is right in holding that these verses are not to be taken as an indictment of Simon's lack of hospitality but rather as proofs of "her extraordinary affection."



other three Gospels,<sup>1</sup> and numerous attempts have been made to determine their relationship to each other.<sup>2</sup> Though this is an interesting problem, it need not be discussed here. The important question is what did Luke intend to convey by relating this incident? What does it teach about divine forgiveness?

It seems probable that the main purpose of Luke's narrative is to give an example of the results of forgiveness. This purpose, however, is partially obscured. Verse 47 suggests to some that the woman was forgiven because (ὅτι) she showed humble and penitent love.<sup>3</sup> But this, as the context shows, is probably not the case. Several reasons may be given in support.

(a) The little parable about the creditor who forgave two debtors

1. Cf. Matt. 26.6-13; Mk. 14.3-9; Jn. 12.1-8.
2. For an excellent, though somewhat dated historical summary of opinions see J. B. Mayor, "Mary," HDB, III, 282f. Some have held the two stories to have been basically the same incident: Bultmann, Die Geschichte . . ., pp. 19f.; E. Klostermann, Das Lukasevangelium ("Handbuch zum Neuen Testament"; 2d. ed.; Tuebingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1929), p. 92; Montefiore, The Synoptic . . ., II, 428ff.; O. Holtzmann, The Life of Jesus, trans. J. T. Bealby and M. A. Canney (London: A. & C. Black, 1904), pp. 72, 407ff; Dibelius, From Tradition . . ., p. 114. Others have held that they were basically separate incidents: Bruce, Exp. Grk. Test., I, 515ff.; Mayor, HDB, III, 282a; Plummer, Luke, p. 209; Wm. Manson, Luke, pp. 85f.; V. Taylor, The Formation of the Gospel Tradition (2d. ed.; London: Macmillan & Co., 1935), p. 154; Streeter, The Four . . ., p. 210; Jeremias, The Parables . . ., p. 100.
3. Søren Kierkegaard, Training in Christianity: and the Edifying Discourse Which Accompanied It, trans. Walter Lowrie (Princeton: University Press, 1944), pp. 261-71, generally takes this approach. He insists, however, that the woman has done absolutely nothing to be worthy of forgiveness.

(7.41f.) is probably an inherent part of this narrative;<sup>1</sup> it emphasizes that love is the expected result of forgiveness.

(b) In 7.44b-46 there is a notable antithetic parallelism in which the woman's warm devotion to Jesus is contrasted with the less warm greeting of Simon. This continues the use of contrasts employed in the parable. Again, the moral in 7.47b-- "but he who is forgiven little, loves little"--carries out the theme of the parable. However, 7.47a-- *ἀφένοντα αἱ ἁμαρτίαι αὐτῆς . . . ὅτι ἠγάπησεν πολὺ* --breaks this<sup>2</sup> theme and also is not in parallel with 7.47b. Matthew Black demonstrates that there may be a slight mistranslation of the Aramaic behind this verse. His suggested translation of 7.47 reads:

Wherefore I say unto thee,  
 ( . . . )  
 One whose many sins are forgiven loveth much  
 ( . . . ), but to whom little is forgiven, the same  
 loveth little. [the Aramaic is omitted]

(c) The woman's display of emotion at Jesus feet is not necessarily a mark of penitence. It may be primarily a sign of penitence and

1. Though Bultman, *Die Geschichte . . .*, pp. 19f. considers it to have been a subsequent insertion into the Anointing-at-Bethany story, Klostermann, *Lukas*, p. 92, shows that this is improbable for the parable (love results from being forgiven) does not quite fit the narrative; i.e., if the parable is separated from the narrative leaving vs. 47 dubious, then God's forgiveness results from the woman's love. Black, *An Aramaic . . .*, pp. 139f., has demonstrated from the Aramaic background that the parable is probably inherent in the passage.

2. *An Aramaic . . .*, p. 140.

petition for forgiveness,<sup>1</sup> but, on the other hand, it may be primarily a sign of affection and gratitude for a gift previously received.<sup>2</sup> (d) Jesus' words to the woman--ἀφέωνταί σου αἱ ἁμαρτίαι (7.48)--are probably a reassurance to her that her sins have been forgiven (perf. pass.) in the past and continue to stand forgiven.

Taking these observations together, they point to the conclusion that Luke portrays the woman's actions as an example of gratitude for divine forgiveness received.<sup>3</sup> This conclusion, of course, does not rule out the possibility that penitence still played a part in her actions.

From hints earlier in this chapter it is probable that Luke further uses the incident as an illustration of Jesus' fulfilling his purpose to preach good news to the poor (7.22) and of the true charge against Jesus, that he was a "friend of tax collectors and sinners (ἁμαρτωλῶν)," 7.34.<sup>4</sup>

It is also an illustration of the fact that forgiveness is only real to those whose sense of sin is great.<sup>5</sup>

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1. So Montefiore, The Synoptic . . ., II, 432ff.
  2. Jeremias, The Parables . . ., pp. 101f., argues this. He says that Aramaic has no word for thanks, and therefore such expressions have to be made by actions.
  3. This is the interpretation of: Plummer, Luke, pp. 213f.; Wm. Manson, Luke, pp. 84f.; J. S. Stewart, The Life and Teaching . . ., p. 96; Holtzmann, The Life . . ., p. 411 note; Easton, Luke, p. 106; A. B. Bruce, The Parabolic Teaching of Christ (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1887), pp. 244ff.
  4. So Redlich, The Forgiveness . . ., p. 160.
  5. Cf. Lk. 18.9-14 (Pharisee and Publican in the Temple).



The centrality of the person of Jesus in this story is also important. He had evidently proclaimed and exemplified God's forgiveness to the woman sometime before this meal. He allows her to treat him in a worshipful manner in the presence of and to the exclusion of the others.<sup>1</sup> With confident authority he gives public assurance of forgiveness to her; finally, others at the table are reported as wondering who this is who forgives sins. Jesus is the central figure in the picture and is apparently presented as the mediator of God's forgiveness.

It must not go unnoticed that in assuring forgiveness to this sinner Jesus incurred the silent disdain of his host and open reproach from others at the table. This theme of the rejection of Jesus as he imparts grace to sinners continues to be a recurrent one.

#### Summary:

1. This is an account of a woman who came to Jesus to express gratitude, probably because she had previously been made aware of God's forgiveness mediated through him.
2. Her actions illustrate that divine forgiveness results in grateful and humble love.
3. The passage illustrates and shows the effect of the mission of Jesus to sinners.
4. It illustrates that forgiveness is real only to those to whom sin is real.
5. Jesus is presented as the mediator of God's forgiveness to individuals, and there are hints at the personal cost for him.

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1. Jesus' disciples recoil from receiving such expressions: Acts 3.12; 10.25f; 14.14f.; see also Rev. 19.10 where an "angel" rejects such expression.



## Forgiveness from the Cross

(Lk. 23.34)

In Luke's account of the crucifixion (23.32-34) there is the report of the first of the traditional "seven words from the cross." Immediately following the simple statement of the fact of the crucifixion of Jesus there is the prayer of Jesus:

Father, forgive them ( $\chi\phi\epsilon\varsigma\ \alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ ); for they know not what they do.

23.34a

### The Question of Genuineness

Though this brief prayer is found in numerous manuscripts,  $\chi$ , A, C, and others,<sup>1</sup> it is omitted in B, D, W,  $\Theta$ , and others.<sup>2</sup> The textual problem is well stated by Plummer: "The omission in such witnesses would be very difficult to explain, if the passage had been part of the original text of Luke."<sup>3</sup> This has led some scholars to be doubtful about its being in the original text, but its intrinsic value has usually prevented them from declaring it unhistorical.<sup>4</sup> There are two possible methods

1. The "Lake Group," the "Ferrar Group," the Koine Text (E, F, G, H), the Old Latin Version, the Old Syriac Version of the Codex Curetonianus, Peshitta Syriac Version, Irenaeus (circa 190), Origen (circa 254).
2. The Old Syriac Version of the palimpsest in St. Catherine's Monastery on Mt. Sinai, and the Coptic Versions of the New Testament in the northern (Bohairic) and southern (Sahidic) dialects.
3. Luke, p. 545.
4. See Plummer, Luke, pp. 544f.; Klostermann, Lukas, p. 266; Montefiore, The Synoptic . . ., II, 625. Lohse, Maertyrer . . ., pp. 129ff., shows that neither Acts 7.60 nor Is. 53.12 can be thought to have prompted the later creation of this prayer by the Christian community (p. 129).

of solution which hold to the historicity of the verse. One can either attempt to give a reasonable account of the omission or admit that the verse was possibly not in the original text and argue for its historical authenticity on other grounds.

Taking the former method, Streeter<sup>1</sup> explains the omission on doctrinal grounds. It is suggested that a Christian scribe of the second century possibly found it difficult to believe that God had forgiven the Jews; this was especially difficult to believe in view of the two destructions of Jerusalem. This early Christian may have reasoned that if Jesus had prayed this prayer, God had declined to grant it; but it was easier to surmise that the prayer was not original, and, therefore, ought to be omitted. M. Dibelius<sup>2</sup> also holds that the verse belongs to the original text. He suggests that the omission was due to early scribal assimilation of the text to the parallel accounts in the other gospels.

The second solution includes the admission that verse 34a is secondary (not in the original text) and an argument that it is, nevertheless, historically authentic. "The words, of course, may well have been handed down in a genuine tradition, even if they were not recorded by Luke."<sup>3</sup> It is authentic, so the

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1. The Four . . ., pp. 138f.; F. F. Bruce, The Acts of the Apostles (2d ed.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1952), pp. 110f., agrees.
  2. From Tradition . . ., p. 203, note 2.
  3. Streeter, The Four . . ., p. 138. So also Zimmerli and Jeremias, The Servant . . ., p. 99, note 455.

reasoning goes (a) because this attitude toward the crucifiers of Jesus is more likely to be his own than that of his disciples; (b) because such forgiveness for the unrepentant is seemingly not consistent with the other teaching in the synoptic gospels and, therefore, is not likely to be a created interpolation by a later Christian. This reasoning is not "water-tight", at all, but it may safely be presumed that we are here dealing with an ancient tradition which has a strong claim to having a dominical origin.

#### The Contribution of this Prayer to the Study of Divine Forgiveness

For whom does Jesus pray in this prayer? Interpreters have differed over who is included in the *αὐτοῖς*. It has been suggested that it includes only the crucifying soldiers, or the religious leaders,<sup>1</sup> or all his persecutors--the Roman soldiers and Jews generally.<sup>2</sup> Verses 33 and 34b which come immediately before and after this prayer read: ". . . they came to the place . . . there they crucified him . . . And they cast lots . . . ." These may refer only to the unwitting soldiers, but there is no compelling reason to limit the prayer to them. Since there is a possible reference to Is. 53.12c (" . . . and made intercession for the

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1. So J. F. Bethune-Baker, "Forgiveness," HDB, II, 58a; Plummer, Luke, p. 531.

2. Easton, Luke, p. 348; Lohse, Maertyrer . . ., p. 130; Dalman, Jesus . . ., pp. 195f.

transgressors."), it may be interpreted to include the "many" of Is. 52.14f. and 53.11f. This finds some support in the verses Mk. 10.45; 14.24 where there are widely inclusive statements regarding the beneficiaries of the death of Jesus. The usual universal outlook of Luke is probably to be seen here also.

What does he ask to be forgiven? This is not said explicitly, but the clear implication of  $\tau\acute{\iota}\ \pi\omicron\lambda\omicron\upsilon\sigma\iota\nu$  is that Jesus petitions that all responsible might be forgiven of the crime they were then committing--rejecting and crucifying him, the Messiah of God. The execution of Jesus was fully intentional; therefore, the only way this can be called an "unwitting" act ( $\omicron\upsilon\ \gamma\alpha\rho\ \omicron\lambda\omicron\gamma\alpha\sigma\iota\nu$ ) is in the fact that the Jews did not recognize that this was indeed their Messiah whom they were slaying. That this was the point of ignorance is emphasized in the contexts of Acts 3.17; 13.27.

In this prayer Jesus appears in the Servant role (cf. Is. 53.12).<sup>1</sup> By the same token he gives an effective example to his own teaching: "... bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you" (Lk. 6.28 par.). If it is true that Jesus has followed the role of the Servant and intends such an equation here, does this prayer indicate that his death had power to expiate sins? In later Judaism death was a means of expiation for one's own sin<sup>2</sup> and, in the case of certain martyr deaths, for the sins

1. So Zimmerli and Jeremias, The Servant . . ., pp. 98f.

2. See Lohse, Martyrdom . . ., pp. 38ff.; Dalman, Jesus . . ., p. 128.



of Israel generally.<sup>1</sup> When this is remembered, as well as Is. 53, it may be inferred that he here wished that his death might in some way exhaust the consequences of the sins of his executors and thereby annul them.<sup>2</sup> K. Bornhaeuser writes: "Kein Wort gegen die Feinde, sondern eine Bitte fuer sie und damit Zueignung der Suehnkraft seines Todes an sie."<sup>3</sup> Yet such an interpretation seems to attribute to Jesus less spontaneity than seems probable in this situation. One might say that Luke intended the prayer to hint at the expiatory effect of Jesus' death.<sup>4</sup> However, it seems to be a distortion of the exegetical process to attempt to find a teaching or a doctrine about forgiveness here. It is possible that Luke records the prayer not for the ideas which it shows Jesus to have had about forgiveness but rather to show forgiveness in action. Even during the violent end to the life of God's Messiah there is forgiving mercy on his lips. The prayer witnesses to Jesus' final obedience to the will of the Father.

#### Summary:

1. It seems probable that this prayer is a genuine word of Jesus.
2. He prays, presumably, for all responsible for his death.
3. His request is that they be forgiven, presumably, of the crime of killing God's Messiah.

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1. See p. 68 above.

2. So Zimmerli and Jeremias, The Servant . . ., p. 102. Cf. contra, Lohse, Maertyrer . . ., p. 131.

3. Quoted by Lohse, Maertyrer . . ., p. 130.

4. So Stauffer, New Testament . . ., p. 131.

4. The prayer may indicate that Jesus envisaged an expiatory efficacy in his death, but this is not certain. It may have been Luke's method of getting this concept across to his Greek readers.

5. The prayer is more important as forgiveness in action. It shows the Christ forgiving men at the very moment of their total rejection of him.

### Forgiveness in the Great Commission

(Lk. 24.47)

The final explicit occurrence of *ἀφεσις* in the synoptic gospels comes in Luke's account of the commission to the disciples:

Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I send the promise of my Father . . . .'

Lk. 24.45-49

### The Genuineness of the Passage

Luke's 24th chapter gives the impression that all the action it includes<sup>1</sup> took place on the same day as the resurrection. However, it is generally agreed that the words of Jesus reported in these verses (44-49) are probably a summary of this teaching over a longer period.<sup>2</sup> If this represents a summary, it may be that these words are placed in the mouth of Jesus by later di-

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1. The morning visit of the women to the empty tomb (vss. 1-11); the Emmaus road episode (13-35); the surprise appearance to the disciples that evening (36-43); final instructions (44-49); parting at Bethany (50-53).

2. E. g., Creed, Luke, p. 300; Wm. Manson, Luke, p. 270.

sciples without much, if any historical basis at all.<sup>1</sup> However, in the light of his whole ministry it seems probable that they truly reflect his intention, and thus they may well be based on a genuine saying.<sup>2</sup>

Though the expression is quite different, Luke's commission, 24.44ff., and its partial reiteration in Acts 1.8 correspond essentially to Matthew's commission in 28.19f. Indeed, this kind of missionary commission is reflected frequently in the early tradition: I Cor. 1.17; 15.1ff; Acts 10.42; Gal. 2.9; (Mk. 16.15); Jn. 20.21.

#### The Meaning of the Command

What, then, is the meaning of preaching in his name repentance for (ἐῖς)<sup>3</sup> the forgiveness of sins. It is the proclamation in the name of Christ that for the radical turning of the life away from rebelliousness against God followed by a turning toward him there is forgiveness. One difference between this message and that of John the Baptist (Mk. 1.4) lies in the fact that the apostles preach "in the name of" Jesus. The impli-

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1. So Bultmann, Die Geschichte . . ., p. 163; Foakes-Jackson and Lake, The Beginnings . . ., I, 335ff., argue for the late interpolation of Matt. 28.19f. So also Montefiore, The Synoptic . . ., II, 357, 644.
  2. So Stauffer, New Testament . . ., p. 160; Bright, The Kingdom . . ., p. 211; Cullmann, Baptism . . ., pp. 9ff.
  3. Read ἐῖς with ἄ and B, in place of καί; this is substantiated by the use of ἐῖς in Mk. 1.4//Lk. 3.3; Matt. 26.28; Acts 2.38; cf. 11.18. So Plummer, Luke, p. 563. However, καί is significantly used in Acts 5.31; cf. 20.21.



cation of the passage is that the scriptural necessity (vs. 45) for the Christ to suffer and rise from the dead (vs. 46) had something to do with the consequent proclamation of repentance and forgiveness. Thus, the commission to preach "in his name" is to offer forgiveness "on the ground of all that His name stands for--all that He is and has done. In the future the hope of pardon rests not upon the general truth that God is merciful, but on the particular manifestation of His mercy made in the Incarnation and Atonement."<sup>1</sup>

#### Summary:

1. It appears quite probable that this commission is a genuine word of Jesus or, at least, true to the intention of Jesus.
2. It is a charge to the disciples to preach repentance for forgiveness on the basis of the suffering, death and living presence of God's Messiah.
3. The universality of this message is unequivocally affirmed ("to all nations").

#### The Parabolic Teaching about Divine Forgiveness

In this section a number of parables will be examined for their teaching on the subject of divine forgiveness. These may be generally referred to as parables of God's mercy to sinners. Either by way of their content or context there is teaching about God's way with the outcast and despised. The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant (Mt. 18.23-35) has already been noted (pp.139ff.

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1. Swete, The Forgiveness . . . , p. 57. See p.253 below.



above), since it contains explicit references to forgiveness. Though other parables besides these might be included, the following are the most relevant to the present study.

### The Physician and the Sick

(Mk. 2.17 and parallels)

Immediately following the call of Levi, the tax gatherer, Mark reports that Jesus was present at a large banquet with many "tax collectors and sinners." The passage is grouped with his "conflict stories" (Mk. 2.1-3.6), and in it the scribes appear for the second time questioning the action of Jesus. "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?" Overhearing, Jesus answers their charge with a "parable,"<sup>1</sup> coupled with immediate application: "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."<sup>2</sup> The parable is presumably used by Jesus for two purposes. First, it conveys to the scribes the reason why he associates with these people--they are likened to those who need medical care. "They are sick and need help; that is why I gather the despised into my company."<sup>3</sup> Thus, by eliciting the sympathy

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1. Smith, The Parables . . ., p. 30, calls this an example of the "primitive form" of the mashal.
  2. The genuineness of this final application has been questioned. Some hold it to be a Markan expansion (See Dodd, The Parables . . ., pp. 117f.), but the wording and general appropriateness make it probably authentic to Jesus. So Taylor, Mark, p. 207.
  3. Jeremias, The Parables . . ., p. 100.

of his critics Jesus defends his action.<sup>1</sup> Secondly, Jesus indicates that his call is only to the sinful, and not to those who consider themselves to be righteous.<sup>2</sup> Speaking in irony,<sup>3</sup> his purpose is, by way of rebuke, to open the eyes of the scribes. Unless they sense spiritual need and recognize their estrangement from God his mission will be meaningless to them. In this action and saying Jesus first expresses the grace of God to sinners, while they are still sinners,<sup>4</sup> and, second, seeks to provoke repentance both in them and in the self-righteous scribes.

#### The Great Supper

(Lk. 14.15-24; cf. Matt. 22.1-10)<sup>5</sup>

The former contrast between the sick and healthy is here changed to one between the hungry and satisfied. Again Jesus is

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1. So Jeremias, The Parables . . ., p. 100; A. T. Cadoux, The Parables of Jesus (London: James Clarke & Co., [1932]), p. 141.
  2. This exclusion of the self-righteous is repeated in Lk. 16.15 and 18.9ff.
  3. So Hunter, Mark, p. 40; Taylor, Mark, p. 207.
  4. Hunter, Mark, p. 40, writes that it "would be true to say that this word of Jesus strikes the keynote of the Gospel. The new thing in Christianity is not the doctrine that God saves sinners. No Jew would have denied that. It is the assertion 'that God loves and saves them as sinners without waiting for them to become righteous and deserving of salvation' . . . this is the authentic and glorious doctrine of true Christianity in any age."
  5. Luke's version is probably closer to the original. Numerous features in Matthew's version (king, son, marriage feast, killing of servants, king's anger, and punishment) give evi-

pictured as speaking to his critics--the religious authorities.<sup>1</sup>  
 A man gave a banquet and issued invitations to many. When all was ready he sent his servant to inform the guests. For various reasons they refuse, consequently the host extends the invitation to others in the streets and lanes--the "poor and maimed and blind and lame." "Go out to the highways and hedges, and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled. For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet" (Lk. 14.23-24). The feast is God's gift of the kingdom (Matt. 22.2). It is presumably the life of being forgiven, obedient and in communion with God. The invitation is graciously wide, and the exclusion of the guests is due to their own indifference (ἐρωτῶ σε, ἔχε με παρητημένον). The parable seems to imply that those who were listening to it, the Pharisees, were the very ones who had received an invitation (κεκλημένοις) and who had, thus far, refused to come.<sup>2</sup> For that reason the invitation is extended to others. "'You' he says, 'are like the guests who slighted the invitation; you would not receive it; hence God called the publicans and sinners and has offered them the salva-

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dence that it has been allegorized and changed because of later historical events and doctrinal interests. See Streeter, The Four . . ., p. 516; Jeremias, The Parables . . ., p. 53f.; Smith, The Parables . . ., pp. 203ff.; T. W. Manson, The Teaching . . ., pp. 83ff.

1. The Pharisees in Lk. 14.1; chief priests and Pharisees in Matt. 21.45; cf. 22.15.
2. So Cadoux, The Parables . . ., p. 86; T. W. Manson, The Sayings . . ., p. 129.



tion which you have rejected."<sup>1</sup> The parable rebukes the listeners with a view to provoking repentance and defends Jesus' attitude toward sinners. Since God is like this host who extended his invitation to the poor, the hungry and the sinners, Jesus is justified in his invitation to them.

### The Lost Sheep

(Lk. 15.3ff // Matt. 18.10ff.)

Luke probably gives the original context of this parable.<sup>2</sup> He relates that tax-gatherers and sinners were drawing near to Jesus, and this provoked the Pharisees and scribes to murmur against him: "This man receives sinners and eats with them" (vs. 2).<sup>3</sup> In direct reply to this Jesus makes use of parabolic speech with familiar Old Testament imagery. He asks a rhetorical question: "What man of you having a hundred sheep, if he lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost, until he finds it?" It is obvious that the normal shepherd would, and he would also feel a sense of joy at the finding. Anders Nygren contends that the

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1. Jeremias, The Parables . . ., p. 36. So also Creed, Luke, p. 192. It is possible that the extended invitation to those in the "ὁδοὺς καὶ φραγμοὺς" hints at an invitation to the Gentiles. T. W. Manson, The Sayings . . ., p. 130, comments that the "whole parable might be regarded as a midrash on Is. 49.6."
  2. So Dodd, The Parables . . ., p. 120; Jeremias, The Parables . . ., p. 29; Knox, The Sources . . ., II, p. 89; cf. contra Cadoux, The Parables . . ., pp. 230f.
  3. This is a frequent charge: Lk. 5.29f.; 19.7; Mk. 2.17 and parallels.



parables (e.g. Lk. 15) go beyond the obvious and normal in the situation they depict; indeed like the actions of Jesus, they are revelational.<sup>1</sup> Thus, it may be arguable here that this shepherd exceeds the "normal" when he calls his friends and neighbors to rejoice with him over the finding of his sheep. Whether this is true or not, certainly Jesus deliberately emphasizes the joy in the finding. The implication is then drawn; God acts this way in regard to sinners.<sup>2</sup> He searches for them while they are still lost and rejoices over their repentance. "He rejoices because he can forgive."<sup>3</sup> Since this is God's attitude, Jesus felt it amply justified his own obedient action towards the *τελῶναι* and *ἁμαρτωλοὶ*. Thus this parable is (1) a vindication of his gospel to critics and (2) a revelation to all concerning God's attitude and action concerning sinners, while they were yet sinners (cf. Rom. 5.8).<sup>4</sup>

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1. *Agape and Eros*, trans. P. S. Watson (rev.; London: SPCK, 1953), pp. 82ff.

2. The parallel is not so obvious in Matt. 18.14, but the purport is the same. See Jeremias, *The Parables . . .*, p. 29.

3. Jeremias, *The Parables . . .*, p. 28.

4. T. W. Manson, *The Sayings . . .*, 284, writes, ". . . the characteristic picture . . . is not so much the joy over the repentant sinner as the Divine love that goes out to seek the sinner before he repents."

### The Lost Coin

(Lk. 15.8-10)

This is a companion parable to the previous one,<sup>1</sup> and it serves to emphasize in a different way the same idea. The charge about eating with taxcollectors and sinners is presupposed. The parable vividly pictures a poor woman who has lost one of her few coins. She lights a lamp, sweeps the house and searches diligently until she finds it. When she recovers it, she calls together her friends and neighbors to celebrate with her. Again Jesus depicts a situation which is completely natural. Indeed, this may be more celebrating than the normal woman would do. If so, he adds it in, we may presume, as a revelational aspect of the parable. In his application Jesus again singles out the joy ( $\chi\alpha\rho\alpha$ )<sup>2</sup> in finding to be descriptive of God's attitude over the repentance of one sinner. Thus, in laying emphasis on God's desire to seek and save the lost and his joy over being able to forgive, Jesus is again defending

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1. The two parables belong together just as the "Hidden Treasure" and the "Pearl of Great Price" (Matt. 13.44ff.), the "Tower Builder" and "King Making War" (Lk. 14.28ff.), and the "New Patch" and "New Wine" (Mk. 2.21f.). This point is brought out by Streeter, The Four . . ., pp. 189f. Cf. contra Bultmann, Die Geschichte . . ., p. 185, who considers this parable to be "eine juengere Fortbildung." Smith, The Parables . . ., pp. 40ff., 191, argues that the parables are not "twins from birth," nor is the "Lost Coin" a later composition for in that case it would have drawn a closer parallel to the Lost Sheep passage. He suggests that Christ used them on separate occasions (p. 43).
  2.  $\acute{\epsilon}\nu\omega\pi\iota\omicron\nu\ \tau\omega\nu\ \acute{\alpha}\gamma\gamma\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\omega\nu\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$  is but a circumlocution to avoid a direct reference to God. So Dalman, The Words . . ., p. 209.

his own attitude towards the outcast with whom he has associated himself.<sup>1</sup>

### The Two Sons and the Father's Love

(Lk. 15.11-32)

It is clear from the grouping of the parables in this chapter, from their general themes and from the inner verbal similarities that Luke considers this parable to belong to the same, or the same kind of, situation to which the two previous ones (Sheep and Coin) belong.<sup>2</sup> Jesus is further answering the attack on him for his behavior towards sinners (vs. 2), and, in addition, he is seeking to win over his critics. "There was a man who had two sons . . . ." The younger son desired to leave home and try his fortune in the world. Ultimately he is rendered destitute and returns home in penitence. Jesus pictures the father's welcome with numerous details of affection and joy: e.g., expectancy, embrace, kiss, robe, ring, shoes, fatted calf and the rejoicing.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand he pictures the welcome of the elder brother, as being sullen and censorious. There is

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1. So Cadoux, The Parables . . ., p. 229; Jeremias, The Parables . . ., pp. 107ff.; T. W. Manson, The Sayings . . ., p. 284.

2. So Dodd, The Parables . . ., pp. 119ff.; Jeremias, The Parables . . ., pp. 105ff.; Creed, Luke, p. 197.

3. Nygren, Agape . . ., pp. 83ff., insists that this welcome by the father was not self-evident to Jesus' critics, but was completely unnatural to them. Thus, the parable itself would be further revelation of the revolutionary attitude of Jesus toward sinners and not a story which would immediately evoke assent to defend his action.



no application or interpretation attached to the parable; its meaning was clear enough.

This story is very significant for Jesus' conception of forgiveness. The word "forgive" is not used, and it is probable, as V. Taylor has suggested,<sup>1</sup> that our Lord in using this parable intentionally enriched the idea of forgiveness beyond that conveyed by ἀφίημι and ἄφεσις. The father's grace cancels the son's past wrongs and completely reinstates him as a free son with honor and authority in the home.<sup>2</sup> Forgiveness is pictured as full reconciliation with the father.<sup>3</sup> Repentance is pictured simply in the Son's return home;<sup>4</sup> sure proof of a changed

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1. Forgiveness . . ., p. 19.
  2. For the symbolism of the ceremonial robe, the ring, the shoes and the fatted calf see Jeremias, The Parables . . ., pp. 104f.
  3. Taylor, Forgiveness . . ., pp. 17ff., suggests that vs. 20 (father's embrace and kiss) pictures "forgiveness" and that vss. 22-24 (robe, ring, shoes, feast) picture "reconciliation." He holds that Jesus intentionally combines them. However, since they can be separated, he contends that it does not shake his general thesis that "in the New Testament forgiveness is [limited to] the cancelling or removal of barriers to reconciliation" (p. 19).
  4. Cf. Montefiore, The Synoptic . . ., II, 522ff., who puts the main emphasis here and notes that "Nothing . . . can be more Jewish and Rabbinic than this" (p. 524). He stresses the fact of the omission from this parable of any doctrine of the cross or need of a mediator (p. 525). However, see T. W. Manson, The Sayings . . ., pp. 285ff., and Wm. Manson, Luke, p. 181, who point out that (1) the Christian doctrine of the Atonement is not based on this parable alone and (2) this parable was not meant to be an epitome of theology. It simply defends Jesus' attitude toward sinners by citing God's. If the cross became necessary in "realizing" God's will toward these sinners, as it did, then its meaning for that work must be thought out. Moreover, as W. Herrmann,



character is not the basis of the father's forgiveness.<sup>1</sup>

It is generally accepted that behind the father we are to see God, behind the elder brother the scribes and Pharisees who criticized Jesus, and behind the prodigal son those tax-gatherers and sinners whom Jesus had befriended. And it is quite possible that Luke intended a wider reference--prodigal=Gentiles and elder brother=Jews. The emphasis of the parable is upon God's warm welcome and joy at the sinner's return, and it adds that God expects the others in his house (Pharisees) to share that joy.<sup>2</sup> Emil Brunner paraphrases Jesus' words:

You are wrong to reproach me for My intercourse with sinners as though it were godless behavior, for I am behaving toward sinners as God behaves; indeed, there is still more in it than this, for, actually God is acting through and in My action.<sup>3</sup>

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The Communion of the Christian with God, trans. J. S. Stanyon, revised by R. W. Stewart (London: Williams & Norgate, 1906), p. 132, comments, "Jesus did not write the story of the Prodigal Son on a sheet of paper for men who knew nothing of himself. He told it rather to men who saw Him, and who because of his own personal life, were to be sure of the Father in Heaven, of whom He was speaking."

1. T. W. Manson, The Sayings . . ., pp. 286, 288f., emphasizes this point. The father's reinstating grace breaks into the middle of the son's intended speech of humility (vss. 21f.), and certainly no evidence of changed character is required of the son. To the elder brother he is still unworthy, and the father does not deny it. Rather he stresses the restoration of fellowship--not moral character.
2. So Dodd, The Parables . . ., pp. 119ff.; and others.
3. The Mediator, trans. Olive Wyon (London: The Lutterworth Press, 1934), p. 541.

The parable, consequently, has the multiple purpose of defending Jesus' action, rebuking his critics with a view to their repentance,<sup>1</sup> and revealing the forgiving and inclusive love of God mediated through Jesus.

### The Two Debtors

(Lk. 7.41-42)

As previously noted (p. 149) this little parable is linguistically an integral part of the account of the "Woman who was a Sinner" (7.36ff.)<sup>2</sup> Luke records an intrusion which occurred, while Jesus was at the table in the home of Simon the Pharisee. A disreputable woman, who had been assured by Jesus of God's forgiveness comes in and falls at his feet in a spontaneous display of gratitude.<sup>3</sup> Simon feels that a real prophet would not allow himself to be so defiled; sensing his objection, Jesus answers with a parable. A creditor had two debtors; one owed him a large sum and the other a minor sum. Recognizing that neither were able to pay (μη ἔχόντων αὐτῶν ἀποδοῦναι), he forgave them both (ἀμφοτέρους ἔχαρισατο).<sup>4</sup> Which debtor will show the

1. So Wm. Manson, Luke, p. 181; T. W. Manson, The Sayings . . ., p. 290. The Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard (Matt. 20.1-16) forms a striking parallel.

2. So Black, An Aramaic . . ., pp. 139f. Cf. contra, Creed, Luke, p. 111.

3. See pp. 147ff. above.

4. χαρίζομαι --to bestow, or give up, graciously. This word reflects a broadening of the term ἀφίημι. Paul often uses it in the sense of to forgive (sins): II Cor. 2.7,10; 12.13; Eph. 4.32; Col. 2.13; 3.13.

deeper appreciation (πλεῖον ἀγαπήσει αὐτόν)? Simon answers rightly: "The one . . . to whom he forgave more." The thrust of the parable and of Simon's answer is that it is a very natural thing for one who has been given a great gift to feel grateful in proportion to the amount he was given. The parable thus implies that God has been very gracious to this woman, and because she is aware of it, her actions are in proportion and are quite understandable. "Do you not understand, Simon? This woman's love which you despise, is the expression of her boundless gratitude for God's inconceivable goodness. Wronging both her and me, you are missing God's best gift."<sup>1</sup> The parable defends the woman, since her actions were natural. It defends Jesus' reception of her, for God had forgiven her; and it carries a rebuke to the critic, since his lack of love revealed his lack of consciousness of being forgiven or needing to be forgiven.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, it shows clearly that God's forgiveness produces a grateful response of love in those who recognize their need of it and who will receive it.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Jeremias, The Parables . . ., p. 120.

2. So Cadoux, The Parables . . ., pp. 138f.; Bruce, The Parabolic . . ., pp. 242, 244ff.; Jeremias, The Parables . . ., p. 100.

3. Wm. Manson, Luke, p. 85; Montefiore, The Synoptic . . ., II, 432. Cadoux, The Parables . . ., p. 140, and Plummer, Luke, p. 212, point out that the gratitude depends upon the sinner's own estimate of the amount remitted rather than upon the actual amount.



The Importunate Friend

(Lk. 11.5-8)

This parable is appropriately located between the Lord's Prayer and the exhortation: "Ask . . . seek . . . knock . . ." (11.9-13). It pictures a man going to a neighbor's house at midnight in order to borrow some bread to feed a friend of his who had unexpectedly arrived from a long journey. The neighbor, having retired with his family found it inconvenient to get up and perform the favor, but because of the importunity (*ἀναστροφή*) of the friend in need he arose and supplied his request. Luke concludes this whole section (11.1-13) with the words, "If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give . . ." (vs. 13). The main point of the parable is seen in the argument from the lesser to the greater: if "a human friend, who is a prey to moods and tempers, can be persuaded even against his inclination to get up and oblige you, how much more will God your Father and your perfect friend be ready to supply all your needs."<sup>1</sup> Though not specifically related to sin and forgiveness, this parable is further evidence of Jesus' conviction of God's mercy to those in need, and this amply justifies his own like attitude and action.

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1. T. W. Manson, The Sayings . . ., p. 268.



### The Unjust Judge

(Lk. 18.1-8)

This parable is almost a twin of the previous one. The immediate context does not make it clear whether Jesus was speaking to his disciples (17.22, 18.1) or to his critics among the Pharisees (18.9). It falls, as T. W. Manson points out, within Luke's large section of the "Gospel of the Outcast" (15.1-19.10);<sup>1</sup> thus, it is probably further explanation of God's goodness to the needy. A widow<sup>2</sup> seeks redress of a wrong against her, but since she is poor and politically weak she cannot gain even a hearing. The unrighteous judge has no inner motivation to put matters right for the widow, nevertheless, due to her annoying persistence, he finally grants her both a hearing and relief. Jesus, then, immediately draws a contrast between the unrighteous judge and God. If such an inconsiderate person as this judge gives relief, how much more will "God vindicate his elect, who cry to him . . ." (vs. 7). "God listens to the cry of the poor with unwearied patience, they are his elect, he is moved with compassion for their need, and suddenly he intervenes for their deliverance. Such is the character of God. He is the God of the poor and needy."<sup>3</sup> Because God loves in this way, Jesus feels

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1. The Sayings . . ., p. 305.

2. Throughout the Bible a symbol of the defenceless and needy; see W. H. Bennett, "Widow," HDB, IV, 916b.

3. Jeremias, The Parables . . ., p. 117. Since this is the major thrust of the parable, Luke's connecting it with the coming of the Son of man (17.22-37) and encouraging patience among disciples (18.1) is appropriate.

authorized in obedience to God and in mediating God's love to adopt this same attitude.

### The Pharisee and the Taxcollector

(Lk. 18.9-14)

Certainly directing this parable toward his critics, the Pharisees (vs. 9), Jesus draws a contrast between God's<sup>1</sup> decision in regard to the prayers of two sincere men. The Pharisee's prayer reveals the self-righteous satisfaction of a man, who, by current standards of Judaism, was outstanding.<sup>2</sup> The taxcollector, on the other hand was conscious of his worthlessness and sin; he can only seek the mercy of God. In prayer his first and only plea is for forgiveness (ἐλπίσθητι).<sup>3</sup> The contrast is between one who is satisfied with himself and one who is ashamed in God's presence and utterly dependent upon him. Jesus adds that only the latter is justified (δικαιωμένος)<sup>4</sup>—"judicially absolved on the spot"<sup>5</sup> by God. This conclusion was, doubtless, startling

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1. In vs. 14 the passive, δικαιομένος, refers to God.
  2. Montefiore, The Synoptic . . ., II, 556, writes, "He does even more than the Law requires both as to fasting and tithing."
  3. ἐλπίσθητι, by virtue of the influence of the LXX, means "expiate," "forgive" and not "propitiate." See Dodd, The Bible . . ., p. 93.
  4. Only occurrence in the synoptic gospels with the sense of God's declaring a sinner to be righteous. See Jeremias, The Parables . . ., p. 112.
  5. Quell and Schrenk, Righteousness, p. 60.

to the Pharisees. God is pictured as disapproving of self-conscious "penitence" and as approving only penitence, such as is described in Ps. 51. J. Jeremias paraphrases Jesus' meaning:

He (God) welcomes the despairing, hopeless sinner, and rejects the selfrighteous. He is the God of the despairing, and for the broken heart his mercy is boundless. That is what God is like, and that is how he is now acting through me.<sup>1</sup>

### The Laborers in the Vineyard

(Matt. 20.1-15)

At the season when a rush of work is needed in the vineyard,<sup>2</sup> the householder at the beginning of the day employs laborers at the agreed wage of one denarius. Continually during the day he hires others and promises to give them what is right. Finally at about 5 P.M. he goes back to market place and finds still others unemployed. These he also hires, probably with pity for their lot (vs. 15); though no wages are mentioned, they gladly go to work. When they are paid at the end of the day, they all get the same wage--one denarius.. Those hired first begin to grumble at their employer. They think that they should receive more than the late comers, since they have worked much longer and borne the burden of the day and scorching heat. The householder reminds them of their agreement, and protests: "Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge

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1. The Parables . . . , pp. 114f.

2. See Smith, The Parables . . . , p. 185.



my generosity?"<sup>1</sup> The point of the story is that the rewards of the kingdom (vs. 1) are not measured by man's desert but by God's grace; in his generosity he gives without regard to the measure of strict justice.<sup>2</sup> It is generally agreed that this parable was spoken to the critics of Jesus who, like the grumblers in the parable censured his ministry to the outcast sinners.<sup>3</sup> To their captiousness Jesus retorts that God is like this householder, gracious and not strictly measuring reward against merit. Therefore, Jesus himself was justified in his friendship and forgiveness to sinners. Moreover, this grace which Jesus showed was, for the evangelist, the very grace of God, himself.

### The Two Sons

(Matt. 21.28-32)

This parable occurs in the context of the passion week and Jesus' conflict with the chief priests and Pharisees. It pictures a father who had two sons; one day he asked both of them to go and work in the vineyard. The first said "'I will not'; but after-

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1. There is a sharply contrasting Rabbinical story from later times preserved in the Jerusalem Talmud (Berak. 2.3c). There the explanation for equal pay for a shorter period of work is that more work was done during those few hours than the rest did in the whole day. Thus, the idea of reward on the basis of merit is preserved.
  2. So A. Julicher, Die Gleichnisreden Jesu (Leipzig: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1899), II, 468ff.; T. W. Manson, The Sayings . . ., p. 218; Dodd, The Parables . . ., p. 122; Smith, The Parables . . ., p. 186; Nygren, Agape . . ., pp. 86-89.
  3. So Dodd, The Parables . . ., p. 123; Cadoux, The Parables . . ., p. 102; Jeremias, The Parables . . ., pp. 23ff.



wards he repented and went." The second said "'I do, sir,' but he did not go." Jesus asks his critics<sup>1</sup> to decide which did (ἐποίησεν) the will of their father. They answer the former.<sup>2</sup> There was no other answer; even his critics could not deny this simple truth. Leaving it to them to interpret the parable, he immediately proceeds to apply its meaning. "Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you."<sup>3</sup> Just as the preaching of John the Baptist had caused a decision and a division among the self-righteous and the penitent sinners, so now the presence of the kingdom of God in Jesus caused an urgent crisis. The call is made, but only those who respond will do the Father's will and know forgiveness. Thus, in telling this parable Jesus, first, rebukes<sup>4</sup> the religious authorities who have failed to repent in the face of the word of God. Second, he vindicates his own mission to the outcast.

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1. That the religious critics of Jesus are the intended recipients of this parable is seen in vs. 31b and by the context in vss. 23, 33-45.
  2. For a discussion of the textual problem raised by the D readings see McNeile, Matthew, p. 307; T. W. Manson, The Sayings . . ., pp. 222f.
  3. Cf. Matt. 7.21; 23.3; Lk. 6.46.
  4. Jesus does not reject them, since προάγουσιν has only temporal (not an exclusive reference); cf. Matt. 14.22; 26.32; 28.7. He leaves room for their possible repentance. Cf. contra Jeremias, The Parables . . ., p. 101, note 54.

"God's invitation, rejected by you has been accepted by the despised ones, hence the promise for them."<sup>1</sup>

### Summary

(1) These parables do not represent teachings in vacuo. Almost all of them arose from a situation of sharp conflict between Jesus and the religious leadership of the day over the matter of God's relation to sinners. The parables are, thus, inseparable from the total ministry of Jesus.<sup>2</sup>

(2) The parables may be called Jesus' weapons of "defense" and "attack" in those conflicts; they are explanations of his actions. (a) They "defend" or "vindicate"<sup>3</sup> because in the light of what they declare about the will of God regarding sinners, Jesus' own actions are seen to be amply justified. Since his Father delights in forgiving sinners, Jesus feels bound to reveal this in his own dealing with sinners.

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1. Jeremias, The Parables . . ., p. 64.
  2. Kenneth Grayston, "Sin," ThWBB, p. 228, writes, "Parables explain the work of Jesus as the rescue of sinners, according to God's will (Lk. 15.7,10)" [*italics mine*]. Nygren, Agape . . ., p. 85, writes, "It is tempting for the theologically minded to turn Jesus more or less into a theologian, and ask about his idea or conception of God. Jesus, however, had not come to propound an idea of God or purify man's conception of God, but to give a new fellowship with God. He was carrying out a mission from God, and the Parables were means to that end."
  3. Jeremias, The Parables . . ., pp. 29, 99f., emphasizes this as the main point of these parables.

(b) He "attacks" with these parables by authoritatively revealing and clarifying the will of God and by skillfully trying to evoke from his critics sympathy for sinners. The latter are likened (un)to those who are lost,<sup>1</sup> sick,<sup>2</sup> hungry,<sup>3</sup> poor,<sup>4</sup> helpless,<sup>5</sup> or socially destitute.<sup>6</sup> God is declared to be one who searches for and rejoices in finding the lost, who invites and feeds the poor and hungry, who grants relief to the helpless and who freely grants restoration to the socially outcast. In such an attack, Jesus is presumably not simply expressing indignation but trying to change the attitude of his critics. They must realize that it is only such sinners who can know God's mercy;<sup>7</sup> the "righteous"<sup>8</sup> cannot because they exclude themselves.

(3) This integral connection between the content of the parables and the action of Jesus shows that the purpose of the parables was to "compel his hearers to come to a decision about

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1. Lk. 15.3ff. // Matt. 18.10ff.; Lk. 15.8ff.

2. Mk. 2.17 and parallels.

3. Lk. 14.15ff.

4. Lk. 14.15ff., Matt. 22.1ff.; Lk. 11.5ff.

5. Lk. 18.1ff.

6. Lk. 15.11.

7. Mk. 2.17; Lk. 14.24; 18.14.

8. Lk. 14.18; 15.28.

his person and mission."<sup>1</sup> In this sense parables always imply judgment. What the parables portray as the will and nature of God is seen to be realized right there among the people in the word and work of Jesus. To the disciples who knew the secret of the kingdom of God (i.e., perceived its presence in the person and work of Jesus) these parables were signs and testimonies that he was the Messiah and that through him the saving work of the kingdom of God was "in process of realization."<sup>2</sup>

(4) The invitation to partake of the benefits of God's kingdom is graciously wide. It is issued to all--not on the basis of merit but rather to those who acknowledge that they are sinners, since the self-righteous and self-satisfied will not accept it.

(5) Finally, it is important to note that the sharp conflict which gave rise to the parables was a part of the cost which Jesus found it necessary to pay in extending love and forgiveness. There is no doubt that these exchanges involved him in a laborious outlay of mental, physical and spiritual energy and persistently earned him the enmity of the reputable religious authorities.

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1. Jeremias, The Parables . . ., p. 159. So also Hauck, KThWNT, V, 755f

2. Jeremias, The Parables . . ., p. 159. Dodd, The Parables . . ., p. 120, writes, "In the ministry of Jesus the Kingdom of God came; and one of the features of its coming was this unprecedented concern for the 'lost.'"



## Other Narratives and Sayings which Imply Divine Forgiveness

In this section certain narrative passages and sayings which bear on our subject will be briefly examined. These passages do not mention "forgiveness," but they do record traditions of the Christian community which give illustration of the action and attitude of Jesus toward sinners.

### Narrative Sections

Jesus Receives and Eats with Taxcollectors and Sinners.<sup>1</sup>

This is frequently mentioned in the gospels and always occurs as a captious charge against him by the Pharisees<sup>2</sup> and scribes or by others. Behind this criticism lies a fundamental principle of Pharisaism. With roots that go back to the time of Ezra and Nehemiah it was their laudable passion to preserve the identity of Jewish faith against the encroachment of Hellenistic and secular influences. This they sought to accomplish by keeping themselves strictly separated from all that was non-Jewish and from all those who did not scrupulously obey the Torah.<sup>3</sup> In N. T.

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1. Mk. 2.15-17 and parallels; Matt. 11.19 // Lk. 7.34 (Q); Lk. 15.1f.; 19.2,7.
  2. The seriousness of their charges are emphasized by the recognition that they included in their number the majority of Jews and enjoyed popular support. See Montefiore, The Synoptic . . ., I, cviiff. and cxxiii.
  3. See Moore, Judaism . . ., I, 56ff.; F. C. Burkitt, "Jesus and the Pharisees," JTS, XXVIII (1927), p. 397; Stauffer, New Testament . . ., Chapter 19. For evidence within the New Testament, see Jn. 7.49; Mk. 7.1ff.; Matt. 15.1ff.

times this meant avoiding contact with the immoral and those who neglected the ceremonial law; taxcollectors were especially regarded with suspicion.<sup>1</sup> The conflict with the Pharisees persistently arose because Jesus acted in the opposite way to such people and taught that his attitude was in obedience to the will of God. He made the outcast and the sinners the object of his special concern; he freely associated and ate with them. Karl Holl<sup>2</sup> contends that the basic part of Christianity which enabled it to emerge victorious among the contemporary oriental religions was Jesus' attitude toward sinners and outcasts. He maintains that the idea that God offers himself to sinners (the unworthy) was a revolutionary doctrine. It was nothing short of blasphemy to the Jews, Greeks and Romans,<sup>3</sup> for it was generally held that God only had dealings with the pure.<sup>4</sup> As the Jewish scholar, C. G. Montefiore, has pointed out, this attitude was new and original with Jesus.<sup>5</sup>

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1. So Montefiore, The Synoptic . . ., I, cx.
  2. The Distinctive Elements in Christianity, trans. N. V. Hope (Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1937), Chapter II. So also G. Dalman, Christianity and Judaism, trans. G. H. Box (London: Williams & Norgate, 1901), pp. 45f.; Nygren, Agape . . ., p. 68, writes, "I came not to call the righteous but sinners," says Jesus (Mk. 2.17), and with these words He turns the entire scale of Jewish values upside down."
  3. So Holl, The Distinctive . . ., p. 19.
  4. Ibid., pp. 20f.
  5. The Synoptic . . ., I, cxviii. See also Abrahams, "Publicans and Sinners," Studies in . . ., Chapter VII.

To call sinners to repentance, to denounce vice generally, [as the Pharisees did] is one thing. To have intercourse with sinners [as Jesus did] and seek their conversion by seeming to countenance them and by comforting them--that is quite another thing. Did not all respectable persons pray and resolve 'to keep afar from bad companions,' to avoid the dwelling place of the wicked? How can one keep the Law of God if one associates with sinners?<sup>1</sup>

I. Abrahams contrast the "active" sympathy of Jesus for sinners with the "passive" sympathy of the Pharisees.<sup>2</sup>

Did Jesus' friendship and table fellowship with sinners involve his mediating God's forgiveness to them? From the parables he told in defense of his actions we may confidently infer that he did forgive those who saw their need and wished forgiveness.<sup>3</sup> "Orientals," writes J. Jeremias, "to whom symbolic actions mean more than to us, immediately understood that the admission of outcasts to table fellowship with Jesus meant an offer of salvation to the guilty sinners, and the assurance of forgiveness."<sup>4</sup> However, Jesus makes it clear that simply eating and drinking in his presence is no guarantee of ultimate salvation (Lk. 13.25ff); there must be faith and repentance as in the case of Zacchaeus (Lk. 19.1-10).

We may conclude that in repeatedly recording the charges of the Pharisees against Jesus, the evangelists are emphasizing

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1. Montefiore, The Synoptic . . ., I, cxviii.

2. "AM HA-'AREC," in Montefiore, The Synoptic . . ., II, 656.

3. So F. Buechsel, "λύτρον," KThWNT, IV, 349, note 31.

4. J. Jeremias, The Eucharistic Words of Jesus, trans. A. Ehrhardt (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1955), p. 136.



two things. First, they are underlining his desire to seek out sinners, to evoke in them faith and repentance, and to bestow full forgiveness where a desire for it was awakened. Secondly, they are emphasizing the cost incurred by Jesus in bestowing forgiveness. His forgiveness to the penitent was free, but it cost him insults and reproach from the "best" people of the land.

#### Jesus Calls Disciples in Spite of Their Sin.

The gospels make it clear that in his selection of the twelve Jesus did not pick men who were especially morally qualified. Indeed the contrary is implied and, sometimes, emphasized. Levi is called from the tax office, the holders of such a job (τελωνια) are repeatedly noted to be in moral and religious disrepute.<sup>1</sup> Further, in Luke's account of the call of Peter, the latter's awareness of being a sinner (ἁμαρτωλός) is given particular emphasis (5.8). There is no specific word to him of pardon, but the allaying of his fear and the trusting commission which Jesus gives him seem to imply it.<sup>2</sup>

After the initial call of the twelve, the gospels portray Jesus as maintaining a close relationship with them even though they continually prove themselves unworthy. Peter is referred to

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1. They are often classed disdainfully with ἁμαρτωλός, ἔθνη καὶ πόρνοι. See W. F. Adeney, "Publicans," HDB, IV, 172; W. M. Ramsay, "Roads and Travel," HDB, Ext., 394ff.

2. George Adam Smith, The Forgiveness of Sins (New York: A. C. Armstrong & Son., 1905), emphasizes this in the title sermon of this book.



as "Satan" and as being a σαδὺς δαίμων to Jesus (Mk. 8.33) when he protests his Lord's purpose to follow the way of suffering. However, in spite of this severe censure, almost immediately Peter appears again within the "inner circle" (Mk. 9.2). In numerous other narratives about the twelve there appear incidents of petty rivalry,<sup>1</sup> dullness of understanding,<sup>2</sup> lack of patience or compassion,<sup>3</sup> lack of faith,<sup>4</sup> desire for special rewards,<sup>5</sup> vindictiveness,<sup>6</sup> selfish ambition,<sup>7</sup> personal fear and disloyalty to Jesus<sup>8</sup> and final repudiation of their discipleship.<sup>9</sup> In spite of their weaknesses, however, the gospels record that Jesus is consistently loyal to this group of men. To them he assured his forgiveness at the last supper,<sup>10</sup> and it is to these that he appears after the resurrection, when he is reported as comforting (Lk. 24.38; Matt. 28.10), teaching (Lk. 24.27, 44f.),

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1. Mk. 9.34.
  2. Mk. 4.13; cf. 14.37.
  3. Mk. 10.13f. and parallels.
  4. Mk. 4.37 and parallels.
  5. Matt. 19.27.
  6. Lk. 9.54.
  7. Mk. 10.37 and parallel.
  8. Mk. 14.50 and parallel.
  9. Mk. 14.66ff. and parallels; Jn. 18.17, 25-27.
  10. See pp. 233 below.

and commissioning them (Lk. 24.45ff.; Matt. 28.19). By recording these incidents the writers certainly intend to imply, among other things, the forgiveness of Jesus to his disciples,<sup>1</sup> and the high price Jesus continually had to pay in order to maintain his forgiving attitude to persons repeatedly ungrateful.

### Jesus Touches and Cleanses Lepers.<sup>2</sup>

Leprosy was dreaded from early times in Israel, and the Law commanded complete isolation for victims of the disease (Lev. 13.46).<sup>3</sup> It is never explicitly called a type of sin, but its special uncleanness, the various regulations for it, and its occurrence as a judgment of God in several instances (cf. Num.12) made its association with sin a very close one.<sup>4</sup> The account of the cure of the leper in Mk. 1.40ff. has numerous realistic and "difficult" touches which mark it as an early and authentic

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1. In Mk. 16.7 the "young man" at the tomb speaks to the women: ". . . go, tell his disciples, and Peter that he is going before you into Gallilee." In the reference to Peter, forgiveness is probably implied; Taylor, Mark, p. 607, comments that "there can be little doubt that the Denial is in mind." Of the resurrection appearances to the disciples C. H. Dodd, The Johannine Epistles ("The Moffatt New Testament Commentary"; New York: Harper, 1946), p. 28, writes, "His return to his faithless disciples was a clear act of forgiveness."
  2. Mk. 1.40-44 and parallels. The cleansing of lepers is a sign of the presence of the kingdom of God, Matt. 10.8; it is a sign to John that Jesus is the Messiah, Matt. 11.5 and parallel; Lk. 17.12ff.; cf. Mk. 14.3 and parallel.
  3. See Lev. 13 and 14 which are extensive instructions for diagnosing leprosy and for the ceremonial cleansing after one is healed.
  4. See A. Macalister, "Leprosy," HDB, III, 95-99; A. S. Peake, "Uncleanness," HDB, IV, 831b; A. Richardson, The Miracle-

tradition.<sup>1</sup> The manifest concern of Jesus for this man led C. G. Montefiore to comment:

Here we begin to catch the new note in the ministry of Jesus: his intense compassion for the outcast, the sufferer, who, by his sin, or by his suffering, which was too often regarded as the result of sin, had put himself outside respectable Jewish society, who found himself rejected and despised by man, and believed himself rejected and despised by God.<sup>2</sup>

Alan Richardson suggests that this healing of the leper is clearly a case of the forgiveness of sin by Jesus. "Jesus stretched forth His hand and touched the leper, thereby taking upon Himself the burden of the defilement. He is revealed by this symbolic action as the sin-bearer."<sup>3</sup> The action also involved breaking the Law and bearing the consequent curse (cf. Gal. 3.13). Though the cleansing of the leper is the best example, the general healing ministry of Jesus carries implications regarding the forgiveness of sins. Richardson further writes: "Miracles of healing are, as it were, symbolic demonstrations of God's forgiveness in action."<sup>4</sup> Though Jesus repudiates the idea

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Stories of the Gospels (London: SCM Press, 1941), Chapter 4, especially pp. 60f. It is notable that a cleansed leper was required to offer a sin-offering and a guilt offering, Lev. 14.1-19.

1. So Taylor, Mark, pp. 185ff.
2. The Synoptic . . ., I, 39.
3. The Miracle-Stories . . ., p. 61. Cf. Matt. 8.17 where Jesus is said to fulfil Is. 53.4 by healing the sick.
4. Ibid., p. 61. So also C. Ryder Smith, The Bible Doctrine of Salvation (London: The Epworth Press, 1941), p. 141.



that all sickness is the God-sent result of sin (Lk. 13.1-5; Jn. 9.1-3), this must not be taken as a denial of any relationship between the two. The interchangeableness of the metaphors for "sin" and "sickness" and the metaphors for "forgiveness" and "healing" throughout the Bible shows clearly that in Hebraic thought they were mysteriously connected.<sup>1</sup> It is no surprise that the hope of Israel looked forward to the redemption of the whole man, both from bodily sickness and from sin. It is precisely this O. T. hope that Jesus seizes upon to reveal the meaning of his own ministry (Lk. 7.22 // Matt. 11.4f.; Lk. 4.17ff.).<sup>2</sup> Thus, in the compassion of Jesus which heals and does not spurn the dreaded contact with those who are unclean nor the odium of breaking the Law the themes of God's forgiveness and its costs are present.

Jesus is Gentle with the Woman Taken in Adultery (John 7.53-8.11)

This passage almost certainly does not belong in the fourth gospel; yet it is, nevertheless, to be regarded as a very early and probably authentic tradition.<sup>3</sup> It is written in Lukan

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1. See Stamm, Erloesen und Vergeben . . ., pp. 78ff.; A. Macalister, "Medicine," HDB, III, 321a.
  2. Quoting from Is. 29.18f.; 35.5f.; and 61.1f.
  3. For a full discussion see B. F. Westcott, The Gospel According to St. John (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1951-1881), pp. 125, 141f.; J. H. Bernard, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John ("I.C.C."; Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 1928), II, 715ff.; R. H. Lightfoot, St. John's Gospel: A Commentary, ed. C. F. Evans (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1956), pp. 345ff.



language and would fit well during the last week in Jerusalem, perhaps after Luke's 21st chapter.<sup>1</sup>

While Jesus is teaching in the temple and a crowd is gathered, the scribes and Pharisees bring in a betrothed woman caught in the act of adultery. By the Mosaic law this would entail stoning.<sup>2</sup> They confront Jesus with the question: "What do you say about her?" In this it is evident that the Pharisees are motivated not by concern for this woman, nor by a zeal that justice be done, but by their growing conflict with Jesus. They sought again to bring him into collision with Moses.<sup>3</sup> The dilemma consisted of the facts, first, that obedience to Moses meant invoking a harsh, unpopular and almost defunct<sup>4</sup> penalty, and second, that failure to invoke this law meant disobedience to Moses. In answer Jesus attacks their underlying assumption; he declares that sinful men are not the agents of God's punishment and must not usurp his prerogative. Having dealt with her accusers, Jesus turns to the woman. He clearly disapproves of her action

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1. So W. F. Howard, "John," Inter. Bible, VIII, 592; Westcott, John, p. 125.
  2. See the full discussion by W. P. Paterson, "Marriage," HDB, III, 273.
  3. So Hoskyns, The Fourth . . ., p. 568; Barrett, John, p. 492. After failing in their original purpose, they, apparently, abandon the woman which indicates clearly that her conduct was not their prime interest.
  4. So Paterson, HDB, III, 273.

(μὴ κέτι ἀμάρτανε ), but refuses to condemn her (οὐδὲ ἐγὼ σε κατακρίνω ). This may not, strictly speaking, be forgiveness.<sup>1</sup> Yet the refusal to condemn one who is guilty is very close to it (cf. Rom. 8.1). Certainly, the incident shows the gentleness, understanding and forbearance of Jesus with a sinner, and it indicates how he sought to call forth faith and repentance by these means. Again, it may be noted that in order to show sympathy to sinners Jesus is forced to pay a price; he must rebuke accusers and be left alone with the adulteress sharing her ostracism.

#### Jesus Speaks to the Penitent Thief on the Cross (Lk. 23.39-43)

Luke reports a sharp difference in attitude between the two thieves who were crucified with Jesus. One railed (ἐβλασφύμεν ) at him, but the other makes a confession of his guilt and, with a surprising expression of belief, requests that Jesus remember him when he comes into his kingdom. Jesus answers, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise."<sup>2</sup> Though some doubts have been raised about this tradition,<sup>2</sup> which only Luke relates, it seems entirely possible<sup>3</sup>; certainly the evangelist considered it true to his understanding of the cruci-

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1. So many commentators.

2. Cf. Easton, Luke, p. 350; Montefiore, The Synoptic . . ., II 627; Wm. Manson, Luke, p. 261, suggests that it may have symbolic significance.

3. See A. Plummer, Luke, p. 535.

fixion narrative. The penitent man recognizes the innocence of Jesus (οὐδὲν ἄτοπον ἔπραξεν), acknowledges his Messiahship (ὅταν ἔλθῃς εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν) and, even in this impossible situation where both faced certain death, he manifests a trust in the ability of Jesus to help him (μνησθαι μου). In answer to this faith Jesus promises the man far more than he sought.<sup>1</sup> That very day (σήμερον) he would be in the company of Jesus (μετ' ἐμοῦ) in Paradise. The word "Paradise" is not used to convey a literal description of the next world but rather to convey to the ears of the Jewish penitent a clear picture of forgiveness, hope and comfort.<sup>2</sup> Alan Richardson writes: "Jesus' word to the penitent thief must be understood as a striking application of the doctrine of Justification by Faith."<sup>3</sup> Again it is worth noting that assurance of forgiveness is imparted by Jesus in a situation of costly identification with the sinner--condemnation, crucifixion and approaching death.

### Sayings

So many sayings of Jesus, including all his teaching about the kingdom of God, imply the forgiveness of sins, that it is difficult to know where to draw the line here. Only the more obvious passages will be noted.

1. So Creed, Luke, pp. 287f.
2. For the Old Testament and Jewish concept of "Paradise" see Moulton and Milligan. VGT, p. 482; S. D. F. Salmond, "Paradise," HDB, III, 668-72; J. Jeremias, "παράδεισος," KThWNT, V, 768f.
3. "Hell, Sheol, Paradise, etc.," ThWBB, p. 107.

### Frequent Calls to Repentance Imply Forgiveness of Sins

The call to repent assumes either that God has already forgiven or that upon that repentance God will forgive. If forgiveness does not, at least, follow upon repentance, there is no apparent reason for it. That the two belong together is seen in the O.T., in later Judaism, and in the message of John the Baptist.<sup>1</sup> It may, consequently, be expected that Jesus made the same connection.

The concept of repentance in the gospels is generally expressed by the words *μετανοέω* and *μεάνοια*. These denote the same radical return to God issuing in ethical obedience that is expressed by *יָשׁוּב* in the O.T.<sup>2</sup> The use of these terms by Jesus may be briefly noted.

At the beginning of his ministry Jesus makes a declarative statement and follows it with the imperative. "The time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand; repent (*μετανοεῖτε*) and believe in the gospel" (Mk. 1.15 // Mt. 4.17). This same message is implicit in preaching of the twelve in Mk. 6.12, (*ἐκήρυξαν ἵνα μετανοώσιν* which Luke 9.6 paraphrases: *εὐαγγελιζόμενοι*). The assumption in both cases appears to be that repentance is a decision to turn back and receive the extended forgiveness of God.

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1. Mk. 1.4; see also Matt. 3.2,9,11 and Lk. 3.3,8.

2. So J. Behm, "*μετανοέω* , *μεάνοια* ," *KThWNT*, IV, 991f.



In the material common to Matthew and Luke (Matt. 11.21f. // Lk. 10.13) Jesus appears pronouncing woes upon certain cities in Galilee which did not repent in spite of the *δυνάμεις* worked by Jesus and his disciples. Here failure to repent is said to bring judgment. Presumably, if they had "turned" they would have been forgiven. Again in Matt. 12.38-42 // Lk. 11.29-32, Jesus is reported to have drawn a contrast from the O.T. in the matter of repentance. Even Gentiles repented at the "sign of Jonah," i.e. simply at his preaching without any miraculous sign.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, they shall rise at the judgment and condemn *ἡς γενοῦς ταύτης* because the latter were in the presence of a far greater revelation of God<sup>2</sup> and yet were not repenting. The clear implication is that if they yet repented they would not be condemned at the future judgment, but acquitted and forgiven.

The remaining occurrences of these terms for repentance are found only in Luke. Jesus declares to the Scribes and Pharisees that he has come not to call the righteous but sinners to

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1. With T. W. Manson, The Sayings . . ., p. 90.

2. The neuter adjective *πλεον* means "something greater" than the temple (Matt. 12.6), than Solomon (Matt. 12.42 and parallel), than Jonah (Matt. 12.41 and parallel), and the probable reference is to the kingdom of God, as T. W. Manson, The Sayings . . ., pp. 91f., suggests. This is supported by Matt. 12.28 and parallel which closely precedes this passage about sign-seeking. In all events, the reference is to the fact that the "mighty works" of Jesus constitute a "revelation of God transcending all earlier revelations" and thus leaves the people without excuse. So Wm. Manson, Jesus . . ., pp. 36f.; Kuemmel, Promise and . . ., pp. 112f.

repentance (5.32) so that they might stand forgiven before God. When he is questioned about Pilate's slaughter of certain Galileans offering sacrifices in Jerusalem, Jesus warns that unless the questioners and all present repented they would likewise perish (Lk. 13.1ff.). He enforces this warning by referring to the tower in Siloam accident and the parable of the unfruitful fig tree (13.4-9). The whole passage is a vivid picture of the urgency of repentance.<sup>1</sup> The clear assumption is that if they repent they will not perish, but be forgiven. At the end of the parables of the Lost Sheep (15.7) and the Lost Coin (15.10) Jesus tells of God's joy over the repentance of one sinner. The joy is occasioned by the fact that he who was "lost" is returned to God (after being searched out by God). The picture is one of forgiveness and reconciliation. In the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (16.19-31) the rich man in torment pleadingly requests that Lazarus be sent to warn and urge the rich man's brother to repent (vs. 30). The implication is that if he did so he would avoid Hades and be rewarded with Paradise. Though forgiveness is not explicitly mentioned here, it is pictured in the reference to "Abraham's bosom."<sup>2</sup> That repentance is followed by God's forgiveness is clearly implied in Jesus' instructions to the disciples (17.3,4). When a brother repents he is to be for-

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1. So T. W. Manson, The Sayings . . ., p. 90; Jeremias, The Parables . . ., pp. 132, 157.

2. Cf. Jn. 13.23; Strack-Bill., II, 226.

given, and there is to be no limit to this "human" forgiveness. Behind this command is the assumption that divine forgiveness attends man's repentance. Finally, repentance and forgiveness are explicitly connected in 24.47; the preaching of these two in Christ's name forms a part of the commission to the disciples.

To these occurrences of μετανοέω and its substantive may be added the three uses in the synoptic gospels of ἐπιστρέφω in the sense of "turning" or "returning" to God. That such a turning is followed by God's forgiveness is explicitly noted in Mk. 4.12 // Matt. 13.15, where the reference is to the Is. 6.10 passage. It is implicit in the prophecy about the mission of the Baptist in Lk. 1.16 and in Jesus' encouragement of Peter (Lk. 22.32) in prospect of Peter's approaching failure.

From this brief review of the references to repentance in the synoptic gospels two themes emerge: (a) the call to repentance assumes that divine forgiveness follows; (b) Jesus deemed repentance necessary for receiving this pardon. These two themes correspond essentially to the doctrine of repentance in later Judaism (see pp. 63ff. supra). However, two important differences of emphasis are to be seen in Jesus' message. First, it is obvious in his teaching that repentance itself is never dwelt upon at length as being a laudable attribute or attitude per se, as is quite often the case in rabbinic writings.<sup>1</sup>

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1. So Behm, KThWNT, IV, 991f.



Secondly, it is important to note that when Jesus gives an imperative call to repentance, it is usually preceded by the indicative, (i.e. statements about God's grace) or it is preceded by Jesus' own significant actions: e.g., (1) he proclaims the presence of the kingdom of God (Mk. 1.15 and parallel); (2) he does "mighty works," *δυνάμεις* (Matt. 11.21 and parallel); (3) he gives the "sign" of his own presence and preaching (Matt. 12.38ff. and parallel); (4) he associates with "taxcollectors and sinners" (Lk. 5.30ff.); (5) he proclaims the God who searches out the lost (Lk. 15.3ff.); (6) he charges his disciples to proclaim the fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecies in his suffering and resurrection (Lk. 24.44ff.). All of these were followed by the calls to repent mentioned above. The result is that, though Jesus assumed repentance to be necessary for God's forgiveness, he did not preach this and passively wait for sinners to turn. In the forefront of his message of repentance Jesus proclaims through word and act God's grace<sup>1</sup> thus creating the desire for "turning to God" and enabling its expression (cf. Lk. 19. 1-10). C. H. Dodd writes:

It is important to realize how strikingly this broke with current Jewish ideas. It was commonly held that God would reveal His Kingdom (or send the Messiah) in response to repentance and strict obedience to the Law. But the preaching of Jesus implies that God has not waited for re-

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1. Cf. Holl, *The Distinctive . . .*, pp. 17-23; A. von Harnack, *The Sayings of Jesus*, trans. J. R. Wilkinson (London: Williams & Norgate, 1908), pp. 200ff.; Wm. Manson, *Jesus . . .*, pp. 61-63.



pentance. His Kingdom has come upon men without any merit of theirs. It is an act of pure grace (cf. Luke 12.32). The call to repentance is based upon this fact.<sup>1</sup>

"Binding and loosing" - "forgiving and retaining"

Three passages may be noted together:

- (a) "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and what ever you loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven." Mt. 16.19
- (b) "Truly, I say to you whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Mt. 18.18
- (c) "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." John 20.23

These passages, particularly the first, have proved to be notoriously difficult to interpret. The two Matthean passages appear to be two versions of the same saying, and it is possible that the Johannine passage reflects the same one.<sup>2</sup> The first (a) occurs in the report of Jesus' response to Peter's confession. The whole passage (vss. 17-19) abounds in problems which have led scholars to various conclusions as to its originality in this context and its genuineness as a word of Jesus.<sup>3</sup> These questions

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1. A Companion . . ., ed. T. W. Manson, p. 376.

2. So J. Schniewind, Das Evangelium nach Matthaeus ("Das Neue Testament Deutsch, II; Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1954), p. 191; Hoskyns, The Fourth . . ., p. 547; C. J. Wright, Jesus The Revelation of God (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1950), p. 372.

3. For a full historical review of opinions and exegesis see O. Cullmann, Peter: Disciple, Apostle, Martyr, trans. F. V.

need not be discussed here. Rather it must be asked whether Matthew considered Peter to have been given special powers regarding the pardoning of sins. It has been recognized that  $\delta\epsilon\epsilon\iota\nu$  ("to bind") and  $\lambda\acute{\upsilon}\epsilon\iota\nu$  ("to loose") are literal translations of the Aramaic terms  $\Gamma\Delta\chi$  and  $\chi\Gamma\psi$  which are familiar technical terms in rabbinic literature.<sup>1</sup> They denote authority which the Scribes had either (a) to "forbid" or "permit" particular lines of conduct in light of the obligations of the Law (Matt. 23.13 // Lk. 11.52), or (b) judicially "to put under the ban" and "acquit." Cullmann concludes that this latter phrase includes the right of pardon; therefore, he holds that Peter was given "a share in the authority of Christ to forgive sins."<sup>2</sup> On the other hand T. W. Manson, viewing the statement in the light of Is. 22.22, concludes that it is simply a judicial-administrative "authority to declare what is right and wrong for the Christian community."<sup>3</sup> Nothing is definitely said about his authority to "bind" or "loose" sins;<sup>4</sup> further doubt that this

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Filson (London: SCM Press, 1953), pp. 153-212. See also T. W. Manson, The Sayings . . ., pp. 201ff.; Kuemmel, Promise and . . ., p. 139; Schniewind, Matthaeus, pp. 188-92.

1. See Strack-Bill., I, 738f.
2. Peter . . ., p. 205.
3. The Sayings . . ., p. 205; so also Streeter, The Four . . ., p. 258; J. W. Hunkin, A Companion . . ., ed. T. W. Manson, p. 471; Dalman, The Words . . ., pp. 214, 216.
4.  $\lambda\acute{\upsilon}\epsilon\iota\nu$  is used in the LXX in the sense of forgiving sins: Is. 40.2; Sirach 28.2.  $\chi\Gamma\psi$  is used in the same sense in

was included is raised by the neuter pronoun and participles which may point to interpretive powers rather than spiritual power over people.

In the second passage, above (Matt. 18.18), the authority to "bind and loose" is given to the disciples as a group.<sup>1</sup> It must be asked whether this gives to the disciples the authority of Christ to withhold or to grant divine pardon? Both the saying and the context make this doubtful. With regard to the saying, it contains the technical terms for decreeing proper conduct under the Law or for enforcing excommunication; this suggests that the power is limited to intra-community discipline.<sup>2</sup> When one examines the context (vss. 15ff.), it is notable that it envisages a sin and a reconciliation which may occur between men--not between a sinner and God. This, too, suggests a limitation on the binding and loosing power. In the context it is also notable that both the answer of Jesus to the inquiry about repeated forgiveness (vss. 21-22) and the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant (vss. 23-35) make it clear that the disciples

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Rabbinical literature; see Dalman, The Words . . ., pp. 213f., 218f. δέειν does not appear to have been used for the converse idea of withholding forgiveness; so McNeile, Matthew, p. 243.

1. See Schniewind, Matthaeus, p. 200. Both the verbs and the pronoun here are plural in contrast to Matt. 16.19.
2. So Strack-Bill., I, 738f., 792f. T. W. Manson, The Sayings . . ., pp. 209f., points out that the neuter pronouns hint that this saying originally referred to "things" and not to "persons" and thus may not be original to this passage.



are to forgive one another without limit. If the "binding and loosing" were interpreted to give the church authority to dispense or withhold divine pardon, then this causes ambiguity and confusion in the whole section (vss. 15-35). How can the community of disciples distinguish between their own forgiveness to one another, which they are here commanded always to extend, and God's forgiveness over which they are the alleged viceregents? For these reasons it is improbable that Jesus (or Matthew) here intends this meaning.

The third passage, above (John 20.23), explicitly says what may be implied in Mt. 16.19b and 18.18. After the resurrection Jesus appeared to the gathered disciples while they were behind closed doors for fear of the Jews. In this appearance he is seen comforting, commissioning, imparting the Holy Spirit and adding this word about the forgiving and retaining of sins. Apparently, the sins of others which the disciples completely forgive (ἀφῆτε) stand fully forgiven by God (ἀφέωνται).<sup>1</sup> Those sins which they are holding or retaining (κρατῆτε)<sup>2</sup> are retained (κεκράτηνται). It is not clear whether the perfect passive, ἀφέωνται, means that God actively ratifies the di-

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1. Reading the perfect passive (as in κεκράτηνται) with A, D and a great number of other MSS against the future passive in X and the present passive in B.
  2. This verb generally means to "grasp," "seize" or to so lay hold of as to have power to control. Here it is used as the opposite of ἀφίημι; thus, the literal contrast is "to hold" versus "to release" and appears to be a reflection of δέειν and λύειν in Matt. 16.19b and 18.18.



sciples' actions or whether it merely states a fact that is true by the nature of the situation. That is, unless forgiveness is embodied and proclaimed by them the sins of others will be, of necessity, "retained." The meaning, however, seems clear: by virtue of the imparted Holy Spirit these disciples became effective agents in the forgiveness or non-forgiveness of others.

The perfect tenses in the apodoses cannot be pressed to preclude the disciples' part in forgiveness.<sup>1</sup> Nor can the statement be pressed to mean an investment of ecclesiastical power (which may be transmitted and be effective ex opere operato), but rather it is an investment of full responsibility for the divine forgiveness of others. It corresponds to the commissions of Matt. 28.19 and Luke 24.47. This interpretation appears to be supported in the kerygma of Acts where the disciples are seen as proclaimers of Christ's gift of forgiveness but never appear to absolve sins themselves (2.38; 3.19; 5.31; 10.43; 13.38; cf. also 7.60; 8.22; 11.18; 22.16; 26.18).

It may then be concluded that the two Matthean passages do not involve the dispensing of divine forgiveness. The Johannean passage, however, appears to be a commission to the disciples

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1. See J. R. Manty, "The Mistranslation of the Perfect Tense in John 20.23, Mt. 16.19, and Mt. 18.18," JBL, 58 (1939), 243-49; and the answer by H. J. Cadbury, "The Meaning of John 20.23, Matthew 16.19 and Matthew 18.18," JBL, 58 (1939), 251-54.

involving the full responsibility of proclaiming God's forgiveness under the power and influence of the Holy Spirit (20.22).

"For the Son of man came to seek and to save the lost" (Lk. 19.10).

This statement is well illustrated by the Zacchaeus episode which immediately precedes it. As Jesus sought out Zacchaeus and enabled σωτηρία (vs. 9) to come to his life, so this same seeking and saving is stated to be the general purpose of the coming of the "Son of man." The statement may be a reference to the 34th chapter of Ezekiel where Yahweh promises to become the Shepherd of Israel in order to feed, protect and seek out the lost (vs. 16).<sup>1</sup> It is probable from other New Testament references to Ezek. 34<sup>2</sup> that the chapter was very familiar to Jesus. It may be that he was stating in a veiled way that in himself this promise was being fulfilled.

That forgiveness is implied in "seeking and saving" is clear. The only way that Zacchaeus could be called "lost" (ἀπολωλός) is in the theological-ethical dimension.<sup>3</sup> It is probable that to "seek and save" those estranged from God and men involves more, but at least it includes the forgiveness of sins (cf. Mt. 1.21).

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1. The LXX reads: "τὸ ἀπολωλὸς ζητήσω, καὶ τὸ πλανώμενον ἐπιστρέψω..."
  2. Mk. 6.34 and parallel: Jn. 10.1ff.; 21.15ff.; I Pet. 2.25; Rev. 7.17. The recurrent use of ποιμήν, ἡ ποιμὴν and τὸ ποίμνιον shows that this shepherd-sheep theme was often in Jesus' mind. Thus, a reference to Ezekiel 34 is, at least, possible.
  3. Note the same significance of ἀπόλλυμι in Matt. 10.6; 15.24; Jn. 3.16; Rom. 2.12; I Cor. 1.18; II Pet. 3.9, etc.

### Reconciliation Before Sacrifice

So if you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

Matt. 5.23-24

From the context this saying appears to be an illustration of the "new law" of Christ. He has previously declared that there is liability to judgment not only for killing but even for anger against one's brother (vss. 21-22). He now applies this to the sacrificial customs. Where a man has begun to carry out one religious obligation and remembers another, which he ought to carry out, the Jewish rule is that the more important obligation takes precedence of the less important.<sup>1</sup> Thus, Jesus is saying that "the duty of establishing peace takes precedence even of the Temple worship . . . that reconciliation was more important than sacrifice."<sup>2</sup> If the lack of forgiveness to one's offender raises barriers to God's continued forgiveness (Mk. 11.25; Matt. 6.14; 18.28ff.), how much more does active injustice to others raise those barriers. The passage calls to mind Hos. 6.6<sup>3</sup> and has rabbinic parallels.<sup>4</sup> God is sovereign in

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1. See Strack-Bill., I, 284.

2. T. W. Manson, The Sayings . . ., p. 156.

3. Elsewhere quoted in Matt. 9.13 and 12.7.

4. E.g., "For transgressions that are between man and God the Day of Atonement effects atonement, but for transgressions that are between a man and his fellow the Day of Atonement effects atonement only if he has appeased his fellow," Yoma 8.9 (H. Danby, The Mishnah (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1933), p. 172).

his freedom and cannot be manipulated by words without obedience. There is no welcome at the altar for unrepentant wrong-doers. Like the rest of the Sermon on the Mount this is the new law of Christ which sharply sets forth the demands of righteousness.

#### Various Sayings of Promise Implying Forgiveness of Sins.

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Matt. 11.28-29<sup>1</sup>

This saying occurs at the end of several sections which point to the significance of the person and work of Jesus in relation to the kingdom of God (11.2-27, Q).<sup>2</sup> The saying is an invitation from Jesus; it invites the burdened to find comfort in assuming his "rest"-giving yoke. Such an invitation is partially paralleled in those issued by Wisdom in Proverbs<sup>3</sup> and particularly in those issued by Ben-Sira in Sirach 51.23-27.<sup>4</sup> However, in Sirach the call is clearly to learn and obey the Law.<sup>5</sup>

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1. Probably from Matthew's peculiar source. If it were from Q, it would be difficult to explain Luke's omission.
  2. W. D. Davies, "'Knowledge' in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Matthew 11.25-30," HTR, Vol. 50, No. 3 (July, 1953), 113-39, argues that this passage is integrally related to its context (Matt. 11.20ff.) and is fundamentally Jewish in its thought forms.
  3. Prov. 1.20-33; 8.1-36; 9.4-6.
  4. For verbal affinities in Greek see the comparison by Wm. Manson, Jesus . . ., p. 73.
  5. This is clear from 51.23. The "house of instruction" is the "Beth-ha Midrash," the school of the Law. See the



The Rabbis often referred to the Torah as a "yoke."<sup>1</sup> So Jesus uses an appropriate metaphor when he denounces the Pharisees for burdening (φορτίζετε)<sup>2</sup> the people with their legal precedents. It is probable that he has this burden in mind here and is contrasting his own requirements with it.<sup>3</sup> His "yoke" involves learning (μάθετε) from him, instead of from the Pharisees and results in "rest for your souls." This "rest" (ἀνάπαυσιν) has a rich O. T. heritage.<sup>4</sup> It is a God-bestowed gift which is essentially a new relationship to God. Since the invitation follows immediately after the prayer (vss. 25-27), a kind of mediation is implied. It is through Jesus as the sole revealer of God that uncertainty and anxiousness under the *ζυγόν* of the law are displaced by "rest." In coming to him, submitting to his "yoke," and learning from him one comes to God's unique representative and mediately learns

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note on this verse by Charles, The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha . . . , I, 516. This legal "yoke" is referred to in Acts 15.10 and Gal. 5.1 as intolerable to bear.

1. See W. D. Davies, Paul and Rabbinic Judaism (London: SPCK, 1948), p. 150, where several citations are given. See also Moore, Judaism . . . , I, 46.
2. Lk. 11.46, Q, and parallel.
3. So Schniewind, Matthaeus, p. 155; G. F. Evans, "Rest," ThWBB, p. 192; Bright, The Kingdom . . . , p. 205; Davies, Paul . . . , p. 150.
4. See Is. 28.12; Jer. 6.16; 31.25. For the Old Testament and New Testament development of this concept see Evans, ThWBB, p. 192; John Patrick, "Rest," HDB, IV, 230; S. R. Driver, "Sabbath," HDB, IV, 317ff.

from God himself (cf. Is. 54.13, Jer. 31.34). There is little doubt that for Matthew this would include the forgiveness of sins.<sup>1</sup> Thus, Jesus is proclaimed as the living mediator of God's forgiveness.

And I tell you, ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?

Lk. 11.9-13

This passage in both Luke and Matthew (7.7-11) is closely linked with the Lord's Prayer which precedes it in both contexts. The connecting theme of Luke 11.1-13 is definitely that of prayer. Thus, the purport of this saying is that the disciples may petition for and depend upon their heavenly Father to supply all their needs. That the forgiveness of sins is included in this promise is probable from the connection with the Lord's Prayer (which mentions forgiveness in the fifth petition) and from the wide extent of the promise.<sup>2</sup>

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1. So Schniewind, Matthaeus, p. 154.

2. The metaphors of "knocking" and "seeking" are recurrently used in connection with the kingdom of God. The kingdom has a "door" (Matt. 16.19; 23.13) through which one enters (Matt. 7.13; 21; 25.10f). The kingdom of God and his righteousness are "sought" in Matt. 6.33 (cf. Col. 3.1; Gal. 2.17).

Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

Lk. 6.20b and parallel

Blessed are you that hunger now, for you shall be satisfied.

Lk. 6.21 and parallel

It is legitimate to infer that these promises include the promise of divine forgiveness of sins. Of course, other beatitudes imply forgiveness, but we may look especially at these two. The  $\pi\tau\omega\chi\omicron\iota$  were the ill-treated and helpless ( $\gamma\gamma\gamma$ ) who found their protection only in Yahweh.<sup>1</sup> In the Psalms and later Judaism the term came to represent the "godly" as over against the arrogant who trusted in their own power or wealth.<sup>2</sup> The good news of the kingdom which Jesus preached to these "poor in spirit" (cf. Matt. 11.5; Lk. 4.18; 7.22; 14.21) would include the divine pardon.

Again, the hungering ( $\pi\epsilon\iota\nu\omega\nu\tau\epsilon\varsigma$ ) in Luke is rightly interpreted in Matthew by "hungering and thirsting for righteousness." The metaphor of "hunger" is used for depicting the desire for the word of Yahweh in Amos 8.11f. The image of a feast is often employed to picture the blessings of God and communion with him.<sup>3</sup> For Jesus to promise satisfaction of this hunger ( $\chi\omicron\rho$ -

1. See S. R. Driver, "Poor," HDB, IV, 19f.; T. W. Manson, The Sayings . . ., p. 147.

2. So A. Richardson, "Poor," ThWBB, p. 168; Eichrodt, Man in . . ., pp. 48f.

3. Is. 49.9f; Ps. 107.1-9; Matt. 8.11f. and parallel; Matt. 22.1-10 and parallel; Lk. 22.30.

*ἡ ἀπολογία*) to sinful disciples is probably to promise, inter alia, the forgiveness of their sins.

### Summary

#### Narrative Sections

1. The gospels frequently portray Jesus as showing forgiveness by his actions in his daily ministry. This is seen (a) in his seeking out sinners and taxgatherers for friendship and table fellowship, (b) in his persistent companionship and work with unworthy disciples, (c) in his compassionate healing of the lepers and other sick, (d) in his word of comfort to the penitent thief on the cross, and in his gentle dealing with the woman taken in adultery.

2. Though the forgiveness of sins is included in the above, it is probable that the word is not used because Jesus bestows more than this one idea may express. The gift of his own company and renewing friendship includes, yet exceeds "forgiveness."

3. It is significant that in almost every passage where Jesus is portrayed as conveying assurance of forgiveness there is the recurrent theme that he does so at a personal cost to himself. He is often the object of abuse and is often portrayed as being in a position of sharing the burden of the one who is forgiven.



### Sayings

1. In numerous sayings which report his calls to repentance or his general promises of divine grace Jesus evidently assumes that God has forgiven and continuously offers his forgiveness to sinners.

2. In two important statements Jesus appears to connect forgiveness with himself (Lk. 19.10; Matt. 11.28f.). The bestowal of forgiveness is part of the purpose of his coming, and those who come to him in discipleship receive it.

3. The commission of John 20.23 lays heavy responsibility upon the disciples for the forgiving or retaining of the sins of others.

### 6. An Investigation into the Relationship Between the Death of Jesus and Divine Forgiveness in the Witness of the Synoptic Gospels

#### Introduction

The interpretation given by the synoptists and by the traditions they have collected to the passion and death of Jesus contains much that is significant for the study of God's forgiveness. The only passage in these gospels which explicitly links the death of Jesus with the forgiveness of sins is Matthew's important addition to his account of the Lord's Supper:

for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out  
for many for the forgiveness of sins.

26.28

Otherwise, the idea that Jesus died "for sins" is never explicitly stated; it must be inferred from the whole presentation of the

life of Jesus. Likewise, the interpretation that his death procured forgiveness of sins is largely left to inferences. There <sup>are</sup> ~~is~~, however, ample grounds for concluding that these two interpretations were included in the synoptists' "way of understanding" of the death of Jesus.

Several themes running through the synoptic gospels have their roots firmly in the Old Testament, and, when viewed from that perspective, give the clue to the significance of the person and work of Jesus.

### Messiah

Jesus is portrayed as the fulfilment of the Messianic hope of Israel. The course of the development of this hope in old Israel is a long story.<sup>1</sup> Suffice it to say that the term "anointed" (Heb: מָשִׁיחַ; LXX: Χριστός), which designated various offices of divine appointment in the Old Testament,<sup>2</sup> became in Jesus' day to be a special designation of the ideal Davidic leader to come.<sup>3</sup> The new David whom God would send was to play a major role in the Old Testament hope for deliverance

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1. See V. H. Stanton, "Messiah," HDB, III, 352-57; Foakes-Jackson and Lake, The Beginnings . . ., I, 346-68; Bright, The Kingdom . . ., pp. 85ff.; Mowinckel, He That Cometh; Rowley, The Faith . . ., Chap. VII.
  2. Lohmeyer, Markus, p. 3, writes, "Wer 'gesalbt worden ist,' den hat Gott zu bestimmten Werk erkoren, mit bestimmten Auftrag und bestimmten Kraefte versehen."
  3. So Rowley, The Faith . . ., pp. 187f.; Charles, Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha . . ., II, 185, writes that "Christ or the Anointed One" is applied to the ideal Messianic king to come for the first time in I Enoch 48.10; 52.4.

(Ps. 89.20-37; Is. 11.1-11; 55.3f.; Jer. 23.5f.; 33.14ff.; Ezek. 34.23f.; 37.24ff.).<sup>1</sup> This deliverance would be a Day of the Lord, the establishment of the kingdom or rule of God. It would be a "Golden Age" of peace, justice, material abundance and righteousness. V. H. Stanton summarizes some of the main ideas which developed about the Messianic figure in this hope:

. . . the image of the king who in accordance with God's covenant with David, stood in a peculiar relation to Jehovah ('I will be his father, and he shall be my son'), who reigned by His appointment, in His name, and by His power, who would do all God's will, whose rule should be one of absolute righteousness, who would compel all men to honour the God of Israel and bestow on His people perfect peace and happiness for ever, contained the essential characteristics of the idea of the Messiah, as that name came to be commonly understood among the Jews.<sup>2</sup>

It is widely agreed that the synoptists see in Jesus the fulfilment of this figure (Mk. 8.29).<sup>3</sup> Even those who deny that this was true to the original intention of Jesus recognize that this was the apostolic understanding. Since the evangelists believed that Jesus was the Messiah of Israel, they thought that he was the representative of God in a special, unshared way.

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1. See the collection of passages by Rowley, The Faith . . ., pp. 188-92; Mowinckel, He That Cometh, Chapters 5 and 6.
  2. Stanton, HDB, III, p. 352a.
  3. See e.g., A. Schweitzer, The Quest of the Historical Jesus, trans. W. Montgomery (New York: Macmillan Co., 1948), pp. 336ff.; Wm. Manson, Jesus . . .; T. W. Manson, The Teaching . . ., pp. 201ff.; J. W. Bowman, The Intention of Jesus (London: SCM Press, 1945); Barrett, The Holy Spirit . . ., pp. 154ff.; Bright, The Kingdom . . ., pp. 187-214; S. H. Hook, The Kingdom of God (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co., 1949). This is a very brief list, but it is representative of some of the lines of approach.



His mission was presented consistently as being in accord with and directed by God. Indeed, the evangelists see in Jesus Christ and his mighty works the presence of the Kingdom or rule of God.<sup>1</sup> When he deals with sin and evil, it is ultimately God dealing with them.

### Servant of the Lord

Jesus is also presented as the Servant of the Lord of Deutero-Isaiah.<sup>2</sup> At the baptism of Jesus a voice from heaven declares: "Thou art my beloved Son; with thee I am well pleased" (Mk. 1.11). As C. R. North<sup>3</sup> notes, this is widely recognized to be a conflation of Psalm 2.7, which was then interpreted Messianically, and Isaiah 42.1, which is the first of the Servant passages.

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1. See the recent work by Kuemmel, Promise and . . ., which supports the thesis that in the eschatological message of Jesus the kingdom of God was expected to come in the near future, yet there was present in his own life and ministry a realization of that eschatological consummation. The link between the promise of future consummation and the present fulfilment was Jesus himself, in whom the future kingdom of God was seen to be already working in advance in history (pp. 153ff.).
  2. Bowman, The Intention . . ., supports the thesis that Jesus, himself, was responsible for this fusion of ideas. So also North, The Suffering Servant . . ., p. 5; H. W. Wolff, Jesaja 53 im Urchristentum (3d ed.; Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1952). R. Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament (London: SCM Press, 1952-55), I, 45ff., holds that this fusion was made by the church.
  3. The Suffering Servant . . ., 5. See also the discussion by Barrett, The Holy Spirit . . ., pp. 39ff.



The image of the Servant (Is. 52.13-53.12) has been discussed earlier (pp. 36 f.). The important point to remember here is that in accord with the will of God the Servant deals with sin. He overcomes it and bears it away by means of voluntary, innocent suffering. The righteous judgment upon sin that should have struck others strikes him, and he accepts it in obedience to God.

Though some have denied that Jesus was himself the source of this interpretation of his death,<sup>1</sup> it seems more probable that it did, in fact, come from his own creative mind.<sup>2</sup> However this question is answered, there is no doubt that Is. 53 was the key to the synoptists' understanding of the death of Jesus. The fact can be observed in many passages.<sup>3</sup> It may be

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1. See Bultmann, Die Geschichte . . ., pp. 303f.; Theology . . ., I, 45f.; Foakes-Jackson and Lake, The Beginnings . . ., I, 383f.; F. C. Burkitt, Christian Beginnings (London: Univ. of London Press, 1924), pp. 35-39.
  2. So James Denney, The Death of Christ (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1902), pp. 11ff.; V. Taylor, Jesus and His Sacrifice (London: Macmillan & Co., 1937), pp. 46-48, 79-249; W. A. Curtis, Jesus Christ the Teacher (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1943), pp. 161ff.; A. B. Macaulay, The Death of Jesus (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1938), pp. 89ff.; Wm. Manson, Jesus . . ., pp. 121-46; Zimmerli & Jeremias, The Servant . . ., pp. 98-104. C. H. Dodd, According to the Scriptures (London: Nisbet & Co., 1952), pp. 123ff., writes, "At the earliest stage to which the evidence enables us to go back, Jesus is already thought of as the 'Servant' of Is. 52.13-53.12, whose death in utter obedience to God is for the redemption of the 'many' . . ." (p. 123).
  3. Zimmerli and Jeremias, The Servant . . ., pp. 89f., hold that the following refer to the "ebed-Yahweh" texts of II Isaiah: Mk. 1.11 and parallel; 10.45 par.; 14.24 par.; Lk. 2.32; 22.37; Matt. 8.17; 12.18-21; and numerous references

concluded that this theme which runs through the gospels definitely indicates that for the evangelists there was a connection between the death of Jesus and God's forgiveness and overcoming of sin.

### Son of Man

In the synoptic gospels Jesus' most frequent name for himself was "Son of man" (  $\text{ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου}$  ) which occurs in about 40 different sayings. There has been a great deal of investigation as to the source and meaning of the term.<sup>1</sup>

It has possible roots outside the history and literature of Israel, yet it appears probable that it has its main ones from within.<sup>2</sup> The Hebrew equivalent (  $\text{בן אדם}$  ) appears frequently in Ezekiel and in other places. It refers to mortal, dependent man, yet also to man in a representative sense (Ps. 8.4(5)). The Aramaic equivalent, barnasha,<sup>3</sup> occurs only in Dan. 7.13.

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by Jesus to his passion, listed on p. 90, n. 405. I assume with Taylor, Jesus and . . ., pp. 79-249, and Wm. Manson, Jesus . . ., Chap. VII, that the passion sayings are essentially genuine to Jesus and not ex post facto creations of the church. Cf. contra Bultmann, Theology . . ., I, 45f.

1. E.g., S. R. Driver, "Son of Man," HDB, IV, pp. 579-89; V. Taylor, The Names of Jesus (London: Macmillan & Co., 1953), pp. 25-35; C. H. Kraeling, Anthropos and Son of Man (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1927); R. Otto, The Kingdom of God and the Son of Man, trans. F. V. Filson and Bertram Lee Woolf (London: The Lutterworth Press, 1938), 159-261; P. Haupt, JBL, 40, 166-83; N. Schmidt, JBL, 45, 326-49; T. W. Manson, The Teaching . . ., pp. 211ff.
2. So Kraeling, Anthropos . . ., pp. 184f.
3. For a discussion of the difficulties in translation see Driver, HDB, IV, p. 580.

This is probably the most important reference for understanding Jesus' use of the term.<sup>1</sup> The "son of man" in this passage is a figure of supernatural dignity and power and one to whom an everlasting kingdom is given. It is also notable that the figure represents the kingdom of saints (7.18ff.); he is symbolic of Israel.<sup>2</sup> At a later date the figure is interpreted in pretentious and definitely Messianic terms (e.g. the Similitudes of I Enoch),<sup>3</sup> but it is not certain how much this influenced Jesus' conception.

It seems clear that Jesus used the term to refer to himself and to the office and mission which he sought both in the present and future to fulfill.<sup>4</sup> He used it in three general ways: to refer to the present (e.g., "For the Son of man came to seek and to save the lost."); to refer to the future (e.g., "And they will see the Son of man coming in clouds with great power . . . "); to refer to Messianic suffering (e.g., "The Son of man will be delivered into the hands of men, and they will

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1. So A. M. Hunter, Introducing New Testament Theology (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1958), p. 41. Otto, The Kingdom . . ., pp. 201ff., stresses the influence on Jesus of the "son of man" in I Enoch, but Wm. Manson, Jesus . . ., pp. 119f., minimizes this influence in contrast to the larger influence of the Daniel passage. Jesus quite probably refers to Dan. 7.13f. (e.g. Mk. 13.26 and parallels; 14.26 and parallels) but never to Enoch.
  2. So A. S. Peake, The Messiah and the Son of Man, a reprint from BJRL, Vol. 8, No. 1 (Jan. 1924), p. 21.
  3. See Charles, Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha . . ., II, 184f. and the notes on 46.2f., p. 214.
  4. So Taylor, Jesus and . . ., pp. 28ff.; Kueimmel, Promise and . . ., pp. 45ff. Cf. contra Bultmann, Theology . . ., I, Chap. I; C.C. Cowan, "Jesus, Son of Man, A Survey of Recent Discussion," JR, 28 (1948), pp. 1ff.



kill him . . . "). From a listing of all the occurrences of the term<sup>1</sup> it may be observed that the two leading ideas which cluster about it refer to Jesus' passion and his return in glory, his "suffering and sovereignty."

Scholars have long suggested that Jesus deliberately used this name in order to interpret his person and mission. Its associations with authority and with the eschatological rule of God and its suggestion of solidarity with men made it a useful term as he sought to interpret his ministry. That ministry could not be interpreted in the usual Messianic terms for Jesus' purposed to bring deliverance and to establish God's rule by means of suffering and death.

An understanding of the themes of the Messiah, Servant, Son of man and their Old Testament connections are essential for understanding the theology of the synoptists. These do not exhaust all the available material for determining their Christology,<sup>2</sup> but they are more than sufficient for showing that for these writers the ministry, rejection and death of Jesus carried out the purposes of God and manifested his nature. The resurrection is the final proof of this for the evangelists. In the passages reviewed below Jesus is reported as interpreting his

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1. For a convenient chart see Driver, HDB, IV, p. 579.

2. See Taylor, The Person of Christ . . ., pp. 3-17, 156-208.



own death to have soteriological effect. In this saving work it must be recognized that the evangelists believed that God was the author and in a profound way a participant.

### Passages which Refer to the Meaning of the Death of Jesus

Four important sayings of Jesus must now be examined for the connection they may show between the death of Jesus and the sin of men.

#### "Baptism" Passages

Are you able to drink the cup that I drink,  
to be baptized with the baptism with which  
I am baptized? Mk. 10.38; cf. Matt. 20.22

I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how  
I am constrained until it is accomplished!  
Lk. 12.50

The Markan passage is found in connection with the request of the sons of Zebedee for special position in the apocalyptic end which they, apparently, expected (10.35.). In his refusal of their request Jesus asks them if they are able to share his "cup" and "baptism." From two considerations the presumption may be made that these images look forward to the passion of Jesus. First, by the general context Mark appears to be leading up to the final week and the death of Jesus (10.33f., 45; 11.1ff.). Secondly, both figures of "cup" and "baptism" have close associations with hardship and overwhelming disaster--<sup>1</sup> often thought to be divinely appointed. Since this saying

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1. See Taylor, Mark, 440f.

probably refers to the passion,<sup>1</sup> it must be asked whether it refers only to sufferings or does it include martyrdom? The original intention of Jesus may not be ascertainable, but from the context (10.33-45) Mark probably took it to refer to his total passion including his death.<sup>2</sup> Lohmeyer,<sup>3</sup> Bultmann<sup>4</sup> and others have, consequently, held this to be a later community-saying. However, if it is accepted that Jesus did anticipate his own death, as Mark frequently reports, then there is little reason to doubt its dominical origin.

The Lukan saying (12.50) is similar to that in Mark, but its different wording and context make it probable that it is a separate tradition.<sup>5</sup> Commenting on this and its preceding verse, Wm. Manson writes:

If any saying in the tradition has prima facie the claim to be an authentic dominical utterance, it is this enigmatic and oracular allusion to the meaning of Jesus' work and fortunes. It is not the kind of trite and conventional saying which the later community would invent . . . .<sup>6</sup>

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1. So L. Goppelt, "ΠΟΤΗΡΙΟΝ", KThWNT, VI, 149-53; A. Oepke "ΒΑΠΤΙΣΜΟΣ", etc., KThWNT, I, 536, 543.
  2. So Oepke, KThWNT, I, 536; Taylor, Jesus and . . ., pp. 98f.; W. F. Flemington, The New Testament Doctrine of Baptism (London: SPCK, 1948), p. 31; Wm. Manson, Jesus . . ., p. 126; J.A.T. Robinson, "The One Baptism as a Category of New Testament Soteriology," SJT, 6 (1953), 260.
  3. Markus, p. 223.
  4. Die Geschichte . . ., p. 23; his Ergaenzungsheft (1958) for p. 23 lists recent authorities on both sides.
  5. So Taylor, Jesus and . . ., p. 165; Creed, Luke, p. 178.
  6. Jesus . . ., p. 69.

Here, again, commentators generally agree that the "baptism" refers to the future suffering and death of Jesus.<sup>1</sup> The verb *οὐκ ἐχόμεναι*, which Luke often uses, strengthens the thought which the passive *βαπτισθήναι* conveys. Jesus appears to be constrained, hard pressed in a way which recalls his Gethsemane experience. James Moffatt translates:

I have a baptism to undergo--  
what tension I suffer, till it is all over.

In these words T. W. Manson notes both the

natural shrinking from a terrible necessity, and the clear vision that the task must be carried out. Along with this goes the sense that the fulfilment of the mission means extreme suffering for Himself, and that not merely as something incidental. The 'baptism' is an essential, the essential part of His work.<sup>2</sup>

Mark 10.38 and Luke 12.50 thus appear to be two authentic logia which give double support to the conclusion that Jesus referred to his sufferings and death as a "baptism." The question now arises whether he was simply predicting his martyrdom in metaphorical language or whether he used the specific term "baptism" to hint at the meaning of his death, as he understood it. Did the rite of baptism and his own experience at the baptism of John have a significance to which Jesus might refer in inter-

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1. So Taylor, *Jesus and . . .*, p. 165; Creed, *Luke*, p. 178; Wm. Manson, *Jesus . . .*, p. 126; Cullmann, *Baptism . . .*, p. 19; G.W.H. Lampe, *The Seal of the Spirit* (London: Longman's, Green & Co., 1951), p. 39; Flemington, *The New Testament . . .*, pp. 31f.; Oepke, *KThWNT*, I, 536, 543.
  2. *The Sayings . . .*, p. 120.

preting his own death? Can it be, as J.A.T. Robinson put it, that he had "come to see his baptism in terms of redemptive suffering,"<sup>1</sup> and that he was interpreting his death in this sense also? The answer will necessitate a brief look at John's baptism and its significance.

Numerous studies have been made in recent years both on John the Baptist and on his rite of baptism.<sup>2</sup> It may be stated with some confidence that the rite before the time of John and especially after him, was closely connected with repentance and the forgiveness of sins. Though purificatory rites of washing with water were widely known in other nations and religions, comparative studies have shown that the baptism of John had its roots firmly in Jewish soil.<sup>3</sup> There are, at least, four possible Jewish roots which may have contributed meaning to John's rite, and all four have associations with the idea of the forgiveness of sins.

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1. HTR, L, No. 3 (July 1957), p. 186.
  2. E.g., H. G. Marsh, The Origin and Significance of the New Testament Baptism (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1941); Flemington, The New Testament . . ., pp. 3-97; Lampe, The Seal . . ., 3-63 (Lampe gives an extensive bibliography, pp. 323ff.); C. H. Kraeling, John the Baptist (New York: Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1951); Barrett, The Holy Spirit . . ., 25-45; Oepke, KThWNT, I, 534ff.
  3. Oepke, KThWNT, I, 528-32, gives a detailed review of Hellenistic lustral rites; he concludes that John's baptism did not arise from any Oriental syncretism but precisely from Palestinian Judaism (p. 534).



(1) Many instances of cultic washing in the Old Testament appear to cleanse only ritual impurity (e.g. Num. 19.11-13<sup>1</sup>), but as has been pointed out by many, the Israelites did not make a sharp distinction between ritual and moral cleansing. W. F. Flemington writes:

The idea that an act done to the body could fail to have moral effects would be to a Jew unthinkable. Body and soul are a unity, and what is done to the one must necessarily and inevitably affect the other.<sup>2</sup>

(2) There are passages from the prophets which are possible sources for John's conception of baptism. (E.g., Is. 1.16; Jer. 4.14; Ezek. 36.25; Zech. 13.1; and Ps. 51.7.). These, quite plainly, have to do with a divine call for or a provision for a cleansing of sin. Such cleansing with these writers goes beyond the cleansing of cultic impurity to deep moral and spiritual disobedience.

(3) Jewish proselyte baptism was a possible source of John's practice,<sup>3</sup> though this may not be declared to be beyond doubt.<sup>4</sup> However, the question is settled, it must be noted that

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1. See the convenient list given by J. Patrick, "Water," HDB, IV, 898a.
  2. The New Testament . . ., p. 11. On this point Flemington has gathered support from numerous authorities on Judaism (pp. 9-11). He applies this observation mainly to proselyte baptism but suggests that it bears on ritual washings also (p. 3, n. 3).
  3. Flemington, The New Testament . . ., pp. 4-11, thinks this is the most probable source of all.
  4. See Robinson, HTR, L, No. 3, p. 180.

proselyte baptism also implied the idea of purification of the proselyte in the sight of God. It is not certain that this included divine pardon of sins, but again it is probable that little distinction was made between what the modern mind separates into outward and material (ritual) and inward and spiritual (moral) defilement.<sup>1</sup> Strack-Billerbeck concludes from the rabbinic writings that both the school of Shammai and that of Hillel "regarded proselyte baptism as essentially the bath of purification by means of which the Gentile coming over to Judaism might obtain a share in all the privileges of an Israelite."<sup>2</sup> It is not explicitly said to include divine forgiveness, but it cannot be definitely said to exclude it.

(4) The recent discovery of the literature of the Qumran Community has shed much light on another possible source of John's baptism. A number of scholars have suggested that John had a close historical connection with the covenanters,<sup>3</sup> and this hypothesis stands well the test of being applied generally to his actions and message.<sup>4</sup> The point to be emphasized here is

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1. Flemington, The New Testament . . ., pp. 8-11.

2. I, 103f.

3. See primarily Brownlee, The Scrolls . . ., ed. K. Stendahl, pp. 33-53. See also the list of scholars collected by Robinson, HTR, L, No. 3, p. 175, n. 1.

4. This is the thesis of Robinson, HTR, L, No. 3, 175-91.

that the ritual baths for which the covenanters are noted<sup>1</sup> were closely connected with the ideas of repentance for forgiveness (cf. also Sibyl. Oracles 3.592; 4.165-69).<sup>2</sup> K. G. Kuhn writes that the

baths had for the Essenes, over and above their old meaning (to secure cultic purity), the sacramental function of mediating in the divine forgiveness of sins (1 QS iii, 3ff.). In place of the sacrificial cultus of the Temple, . . . the baths, . . . took on a new meaning, mediating salvation from God.<sup>3</sup>

Of course, the lustral washings were far from being regarded as having a magical effect. The Manual of Discipline makes it clear, as W. H. Brownlee points out, that "the moral qualities required for their efficacy as regards remission of sins are precisely the same as those that John held necessary for baptism and divine forgiveness . . . ." <sup>4</sup>

If the association of baptism with the concept of divine pardon of sins was partly manifest before John, with his message it became explicit and unequivocal. "John the baptizer

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1. See J. A. Fitzmyer, S. J., "The Qumran Scrolls, the Ebionites and Their Literature," The Scrolls . . ., ed. K. Stendahl, pp. 224ff.
  2. H.C.O. Lanchester, Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha . . ., ed. R. H. Charles, II, 396, suggests that these washings were Essene.
  3. Kuhn, The Scrolls . . ., ed. K. Stendahl, p. 68. So also Brownlee, The Scrolls . . ., ed. K. Stendahl, p. 41; Burrows, The Dead Sea . . ., p. 328.
  4. The Scrolls . . ., ed. K. Stendahl, p. 41; so also Burrows, The Dead Sea . . ., p. 328.

appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins (εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν)" (Mk. 1.4, par. ). In the Benedictus a summary of the purpose of John's ministry is given: " . . . you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins" (Lk. 1.76f.). Though some commentators<sup>1</sup> have objected that John could not have had a message of currently-available forgiveness, their arguments are quite inconclusive; most recent scholars accept the Markan and Lukan traditions.<sup>2</sup> That is, John assured penitents of the forgiveness of sins; this was done, presumably, at the time of administering to them the rite of repentance-baptism.

In view of the close connection between baptism and divine forgiveness, in view of the wide influence of John and of Jesus' apparent endorsement of his message and his rite (Mk. 11.30 pars.), it seems reasonable to conclude that Jesus had this connection in mind in Mark 10.38 and Luke 12.50. By referring to his passion and death as a "baptism" Jesus must have been indicating that they were, in some sense, for the purpose of effecting the forgiveness of sins.

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1. E.g., Menzies, The Earliest . . ., p. 59; Rawlinson, Mark, p. 7.

2. So Taylor, Mark, p. 155; Cullmann, Baptism . . ., p. 11; Kraeling, John . . ., pp. 121f.; Barrett, The Holy Spirit . . ., p. 34; Lohmeyer, Markus, p. 15; Flemington, The New Testament . . ., pp. 19ff.



This conclusion is strengthened when one considers Jesus' own baptism at the hands of John (Mk. 1.9-11). There have been many valuable discussions of its significance. It will be sufficient here to say that for Mark this incident was not meant to describe a religious experience (e.g., a Berufungsgeschichte), or the psychological condition of Jesus.<sup>1</sup> Rather, as C. K. Barrett put it,

It was, apparently, set forth at the beginning of the Gospel to assert that the person of Jesus could be understood only in terms of Messiahship and the Spirit of God; that is to say, Mark used the narrative as a Christological statement.<sup>2</sup>

The voice from heaven, "Thou art my beloved Son; with thee I am well pleased" (Mk. 1.11), is generally held to be a Messianic dedication or consecration of Jesus.<sup>3</sup> The probable reference to Is. 42.1,<sup>4</sup> which begins the first of the Servant Songs in Isaiah, indicates what character will shape his Messiahship.

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1. As Bultmann, Die Geschichte . . ., p. 263f., points out.

2. The Holy Spirit . . ., p. 34.

3. Oepke, KThWNT, I, 536.

4. So Cullmann, Baptism . . ., pp. 16ff.; Barrett, The Holy Spirit . . ., pp. 40f.; Taylor, Mark, p. 162, notes that it is not a direct quotation and therefore recalls other Old Testament passages, e.g. Gen. 22.2; Is. 44.2; 62.4.

As O. Cullmann writes

. . . Jesus is then designated Son, in so far as, in the role of the Servant of God, he takes the guilt of his people upon himself in his suffering and death. For he who is addressed in Is. 42.1 has certainly to fulfil the mission which is more closely described in the 53rd chapter of Isaiah.<sup>1</sup>

Likewise, A. Oepke<sup>2</sup> writes of the incident: "Es entspricht aber gerade seiner von Anfang an an Deutero-jessaja orientierten Messiasauffassung, dass er sich von den Suendern nicht absondert, sondern zu ihnen stellt." The evangelist John, perhaps, brings out this reference to Is. 53 more clearly when he has the Baptist declare, "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (1.29).

Conclusion: It is possible that already at his baptism Jesus was conscious of being the Suffering Servant.<sup>3</sup> If this is so, it appears to be quite possible that he should later refer to his passion and death as a completion (cf. *ἡ ὥστος ὅτου τέλει θῆ*, Lk. 12.50) of that redemptive work on which he set out at the

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1. Baptism . . ., pp. 17f. Unless there is a reference to the Suffering Servant, the subsequent Temptation narrative loses much of its meaning. If such a theme is not in the background, the temptation narrative does not indicate what interpretation of sonship and mission Jesus holds against the suggestions of the temptor.
  2. KThWNT, I, 536.
  3. So Bowman, The Intention . . ., pp. 42f.; cf. Taylor, Mark, pp. 618f.

Jordan.<sup>1</sup> For Jesus to speak of being "baptized" in the context of his passion suggests that he had a vicarious suffering and death to undergo for the forgiveness of the sinners with whom he identified himself at John's baptism. In bearing sins and exhausting their consequences in his death he expiated them, thus removing the barrier between God and men.

### "Ransom" Passage

For the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many,  
(δοῦναι τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ λύτρον ἀντὶ πολλῶν)  
Mk. 10.45.

This saying in Mark concludes<sup>2</sup> the passage which tells of the request by James and John for special privileges (10.35-40), the indignation of the other disciples at such a request (10.41) and Jesus' consequent rebuke (10.42-45). Matthew closely follows the whole of Mark 10.35-45 and except for a minor change reproduces the "ransom passage" literally (20.28). Luke, however, varies considerably from Mark at this point. He omits this Markan section (10.35-45) after his account of the third prediction of the passion (Lk. 18.31ff.). But immediately after his account of the last supper, he inserts a somewhat parallel dispute over

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1. Robinson, HTR, L, No. 3, p. 186, writes: "What was to be 'accomplished' on Golgotha could only be understood as the full flowering of what was begun in Jordan."
  2. Some scholars hold that this is a separate "floating" tradition not originally attached to this context. See Lohmeyer, Markus, p. 223; Klostermann, Markus, p. 121.

"which [disciple] . . . was . . . the greatest" (22.24-27).

Luke's passage ends without reference to the death of Jesus or to a "ransom": "But I am among you as one who serves" (22.27b).

Which is the older tradition--Mark, which Matthew follows, or Luke? On this point there has been much valuable discussion.<sup>1</sup> The ground covered so thoroughly need not be retraced. It now seems established that the Markan text gives evidence of having had an ancient Palestinian origin; in contrast Luke's hints of later Hellenistic influences.<sup>2</sup> Thus, it is very unlikely that the Markan saying is a dogmatic recast of Luke 22.27 or a later interpretation influenced by the Pauline doctrine of redemption.<sup>3</sup> Though it is always impossible to ascertain the ipsissima verba of Jesus, the wording of this passage appears to be too vague and discreet for it to have been a later community-

1. Among many see H. Rashdall, The Idea of the Atonement in Christian Theology (London: Macmillan & Co., 1919), pp. 29ff.; Lohse, Maertyrer . . . , pp. 117ff.; Buechsel, KThWNT, IV, 343ff.; Wm. Manson, Jesus . . . , pp. 131ff.; J. Jeremias, "Das Loesgeld fuer Viele," Jud., 3 (1947/48), 249-64.
2. See the reasoning of Lohse, Maertyrer . . . , pp. 117-19. He writes, ". . . das Wort der seltesten Ueberlieferung der Herrenworte angehoert und eindeutig palaestinisches Charakter traegt" (p. 117). So also Buechsel, KThWNT, IV, 343, especially footnotes 16 and 17; Wm. Manson, Jesus . . . , p. 131f.; Wolff, Jesaja 53 . . . , pp. 52ff.
3. For this interpretation see Rashdall, The Idea of . . . , pp. 29f.; 49ff.; Bultmann, Die Geschichte . . . , p. 154 (in his Ergaenzungsheft (1958), for p. 154, he reiterates his argument that Mk. 10.45 is secondary to and dependent upon Lk. 22.27); Klostermann, Markus, p. 109.



saying placed in his mouth.<sup>1</sup> We may be reasonably confident that it accurately represents early apostolic, understanding of the words and the intention of Jesus.

Several points are to be noted for our study. Jesus indicates that this serving and giving of life is the mission of the *ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου*. Here is the special self-designation which Jesus recurrently uses to interpret his Messiahship in terms of the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53, and this appears to be the use here also.<sup>2</sup> The four verbs in vs. 45 being in the aorist tense lend support to the assumption that Jesus is referring to himself in the present as being the "Son of man" and stating the purpose of his own Messianic work.

What was his purpose? (a) The Son of man came "to give his life," *δοῦναι τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ* (cf. *τίθηναι τὴν ψυχὴν* in John 10.11, 15, 17). G. Dalman writes that in Semitic idiom this meant "to die."<sup>3</sup> This intention is quite in line with Jesus' three previous announcements of his death (Mk. 8.31; 9.31; 10.33f.). What he adds here is the indication that he plans to "give" (*δοῦναι*) his life; it is to be a voluntary offering,

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1. Taylor, Jesus and . . ., p. 105, writes that "it is better to conclude that Jesus has furnished a theme for later Pauline developments rather than that Mark has introduced a Pauline sentiment into the words of Jesus."
  2. Buechsel, KThWNT, IV, 343, writes, "Mk. 10.45 deutet also das messianische Werk, die messianische Gesamtleistung Jesu."
  3. Jesus . . ., p. 145.

presumably, in accord with the will of God (cf.  $\delta\epsilon\iota$ , 8.31).

(b) It is important to note that he interpreted this giving of himself as a service for others ( $\delta\iota\alpha\kappa\omicron\nu\eta\sigma\alpha\iota$ ). (c) This

voluntary self-offering of himself in service was said to be a

$\lambda\acute{\upsilon}\tau\rho\omicron\nu\ \acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\iota\ \pi\omicron\lambda\lambda\acute{\omega}\nu$ . The word  $\lambda\acute{\upsilon}\tau\rho\omicron\nu$  throughout its

heritage had reference to an equivalent or a price paid for the redemption of a captive or a slave, i.e. a "ransom."<sup>1</sup> To pay a

ransom is to redeem or to set free one whose life is forfeited (Ex. 21.30; Num. 35.31) or one who is held captive (Is. 45.13).<sup>2</sup>

The preposition  $\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\iota$  means "for," probably, in the sense of

"instead of" or "in place of."<sup>3</sup> The pronoun  $\pi\omicron\lambda\lambda\acute{\omega}\nu$  ("many")

has been shown by J. Jeremias<sup>4</sup> and others to be inclusive of the Gentile nations and sinners, generally, as well as Israel.

In the Old Testament there is the idea that the sinner's soul is forfeited to God. In a famous passage it is said that they cannot "ransom" themselves from this forfeiture--the cost is too great (Ps. 49.7-9; cf. I Enoch 98.10). Thus, as the pronounce-

1. For a review of its meaning in historical perspective see Buechsel, KThWNT, IV, 341ff.

2. See David Daube, The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism (London: Univ. of London, The Athlone Press, 1956), pp. 272-82.

3. It is probably not to be taken as synonymous with the milder word  $\overline{\sigma\pi\acute{\epsilon}\rho}$ . See F. Buechsel, " $\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\iota$ ," KThWNT, I, 373 and IV, 344.

4. The Eucharistic . . ., p. 151. See also Dalman, Jesus . . ., p. 119; Buechsel, KThWNT, IV, 344; Lohmeyer, Markus, p. 308.

ment stands alone the meaning would seem to be that Jesus purposes in his Messianic work to give his life in service to others in such a way that he would be a substitute--that which effects the release of those whose lives were forfeited or held captive.<sup>1</sup> This interpretation is both supported and clarified when another possible Old Testament reference is noted. Many scholars,<sup>2</sup> whether or not they accept this as a dominical saying, have seen in it a reflection of the Servant of the Lord of Isaiah. Both the various words and the general theme seem to point to it. The word *λύτρον* is possibly an allusion to the *ψήχ* of Is. 53.10; the *πολλῶν* is possibly a reference to "the many" which the Servant-song mentions four times (Is. 52.14f.; 53.11f.). Other parallels are seen in the theme of service (52.13; 53.4ff.); in the idea of a willing death (53.7-9, 12), and in the idea of the death being a substitute for or taking the place of others for their benefit (Is. 53.4-6, 10-12). Indeed, the reference to the Isaianic Servant seems clear enough to be intentional.

If this reference to Is. 53 was intended, then it is probable that one of the oldest parts of the *kerygma* "*Χριστὸς ἀπέθανεν ὑπὲρ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν κατὰ τὰς γραφάς* (I Cor. 15.3b)<sup>3</sup> finds part

1. On the question about the recipient of the ransom see Buechsel, *KThWNT*, IV, 345f.
2. See, e.g., Otto, *The Kingdom . . .*, chapters 10-12; Macaulay, *The Death . . .*, pp. 119ff.; Dalman, *Jesus . . .*, pp. 118f.; Zimmerli and Jeremias, *The Servant . . .*, pp. 89ff.; Taylor, *Jesus and . . .*, pp. 101ff.; F. J. Taylor, "Redeem, Redeemer, Redemption, etc.," *ThWBB*, pp. 185-87.
3. See Lohse, *Maartyrer . . .*, pp. 113ff., who discusses this at length and cites numerous recent authorities.

of its source in this "ransom" saying of Jesus. Not only did he foresee his violent death, not only did he interpret it as necessary in obedience to the will of God, but, presumably, he purposed to bear in representative and vicarious suffering the sin of men and its consequences under the righteous judgment of God.<sup>1</sup> His death, apparently, was envisaged (by faith?) to be an expiation for the sin of men. Jesus, writes Wm. Manson, "fulfill/s his vocation by accepting the sacrificial function of the Servant of the Lord who gives his life 'in compensation for the sins of the people, interposing for them as their substitute!'"<sup>2</sup> As Eduard Lohse has recently written, "Er leistet mit seinem Tode sühne, indem er den Tod stirbt, den eigentlich die Vielen haetten sterben muessen. Deshalb koennen sie nun vor dem ewigen Verhaengnis, das ihre verdiente Strafe gewesen waere, bewahrt bleiben."<sup>3</sup>

It is further to be noted that contemporary Judaism interpreted Isaiah 53 as a scene of the Last Judgment.<sup>4</sup> It is, thus, possible that the *λύτρον* -word should be understood eschatologically. The expiatory death of Jesus would have eternal validity.

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1. V. Taylor, The Atonement in New Testament Teaching (2d ed.; London: The Epworth Press, 1945), p. 20, writes, "His divinely appointed task was that of the Son of Man who should victoriously challenge the powers of evil, and should suffer and die, representively and vicariously, for men."
  2. Jesus . . ., p. 131. So also Dalman, Jesus . . ., pp. 118f.
  3. Maertyrer . . ., p. 121.
  4. Lohse, Maertyrer . . ., p. 120, has collected the authorities on this point.



### Summary:

1. The mission of the Son of man is to give his life as a voluntary sacrifice.
2. This death bears sins and their punishment, justly due to others, and thereby expiates or nullifies them.
3. This expiation conveys divine forgiveness and healing because it is to be performed by God's decree and by his unique representative.

### Lord's Supper Passage

And as they were eating, he took bread, and blessed, and broke it and gave it to them, and said, 'Take; this is my body.' And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. And he said to them, 'This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. Truly, I say to you, I shall not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.'

Mark 14.22-24

The account of the Lord's Supper is another passage in which the church has long seen a close connection between the death of Jesus and the forgiveness of sins. For the purpose of this study it will not be necessary to determine the total significance of the actions and words at the meal. It will be sufficient to examine it simply for indications of expiatory or atoning significance in the death of Christ.

It is probable that few passages in the New Testament have stimulated more study and debate than this one. Some of the results of these discussions are generally agreed upon and may

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be assumed for this study.

(1) The Eucharistic words (Mk. 14.22-24) form an independent portion of tradition, a cult formula. It is a pre-Markan tradition which has been placed in its present context but is not necessarily original to it.

(2) Of the four accounts of the Lord's Supper the Pauline account (I Cor. 11.23-25) was the first to be written, but the tradition preserved in Mark gives numerous indications which make it almost certain that it is the oldest account of the four. E. Lohse maintains that Mark's tradition "kann mit Bestimmtheit bis etwa in das Jahr 40 n. Christus zurueckverfolgt werden."<sup>2</sup>

(3) "A linguistic analysis of the Markan formula reveals a high degree of Aramaic or general Semitic manner of expression and form, and compels us to conclude a Palestinian origin."<sup>3</sup> Rather than being, what R. Bultmann called, A "Kult-<sup>4</sup>legende aus hellenistischen Kreisen der paulinischen Sphaere," J. Jeremias<sup>5</sup> and others have shown that it definitely pictures a

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1. For the substance of these, I am indebted to the discussions by Lohse, Maertyrer . . ., pp. 122f.; Kuhn, The Scrolls . . ., ed. K. Stendahl, pp. 79ff.; Taylor, Mark, pp. 542ff.; A.J.B. Higgins, The Lord's Supper in the New Testament (London: SCM Press, 1952), pp. 24ff.; Bultmann, Die Geschichte . . ., pp. 285ff., 300; Jeremias, The Eucharistic . . ., pp. 106ff.
  2. Maertyrer . . ., p. 123. See Jeremias, The Eucharistic . . ., pp. 127-32.
  3. Kuhn, The Scrolls . . ., ed. K. Stendahl, p. 80.
  4. Die Geschichte . . ., p. 286.
  5. The Eucharistic . . ., pp. 118ff.; Kuhn, The Scrolls . . ., ed. K. Stendahl, pp. 80f. strengthens this conclusion in the light of the community meal at Qumran.

Jewish scene with words reflecting Jewish idiom.

(4) Though the chronological relationship of the Lord's Supper to the Passover is still a vigorously debated question, it seems probable that the ideas associated with that feast would lie in background of Jesus' words and actions here.<sup>1</sup>

(5) Lastly, it may be assumed that the original words of interpretation spoken over the bread and cup would probably correspond most closely to those reported in Mark's account.<sup>2</sup> Though it is not probable that these words or their intent were originally uttered by Jesus, his creative mind seems to be their most reasonable and probable source.<sup>3</sup>

These five conclusions having been thus stated, certain points which bear on the significance of the death of Jesus may now be noted in more detail.

(a) Bread is blessed by Jesus, broken and, thus broken, is distributed with the words "Take, this is my body." As William Manson has written, "Anyone acquainted with Hebrew prophetic symbolism (cf. Ezek. 4.1-17; 5.1ff.; Jer. 19.10ff.) would have no difficulty in making out the meaning of this sign."<sup>4</sup> The impli-

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1. See Wm. Manson, Jesus . . ., p. 139. For recent discussions on the point see Bultmann, Die Geschichte . . . Ergaenzungsheft for p. 286.

2. So Jeremias, The Eucharistic . . ., pp. 106-15; Taylor, Jesus and . . ., pp. 130ff. Cf. contra J. Behm, "Σαθὴν," KThWNT, II, 136, who holds Paul's account to be the oldest.

3. So Kuhn, The Scrolls . . ., ed. K. Stendahl, pp. 89, 93; Jeremias, The Eucharistic . . ., pp. 118-32; Taylor, Jesus and . . ., pp. 124f.

4. Jesus . . ., p. 141.

cation was that what had happened to the bread would happen to Jesus. Indeed, Jesus gives a double parable; the broken bread was a parable of the fate of his body, and the wine was a parable of his outpoured blood.<sup>1</sup> This appears to be another statement in preparation for his passion, and thus is in line with his other teaching that "Son of man is the Isaianic Servant who through suffering rejection and having his life taken from the earth, attains to a glorious exaltation."<sup>2</sup> By this probable reference to Isaiah 53 Jesus appears to be interpreting his coming humiliation and death as a vicarious sacrifice for effecting the salvation of his people.<sup>3</sup> The Pauline addition of τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν (I Cor. 11.24) is in line with this meaning. All this may reasonably be inferred simply from the broken bread, its distribution and words of interpretation. It is then notable that even if the shorter text of Luke (22.17-19a) is accepted as more indicative of the original,<sup>4</sup> there is still present the idea of a vicarious sacrifice for the sins of men, a sacrifice in which they are given a share.

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1. So Jeremias, The Eucharistic . . ., pp. 145.; Lohmeyer, Markus, p. 307, writes "In Beiden /i.e. the bread-word and the cup-word/ lebt zunächst der Gedanke des kommenden Todes, aber nicht nur als eines nahen geschichtlichen Ereignisses, sondern vielmehr als einer göttlichen Notwendigkeit."
  2. Wm. Manson, Jesus . . ., p. 142.
  3. So Wm. Manson, Jesus . . ., p. 143.
  4. With Bultmann, Die Geschichte . . ., p. 286.



(b) Secondly, Jesus took a cup, and, after he had given thanks, he gave it to his disciples who drank from it. Then he added the words of interpretation: "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many" (vs. 24).

τὸ αἷμά μου

-- The term "blood" has a rich heritage in the Old Testament and is widely used in the New Testament. Scholars have differed over whether its essential reference is to life or to death.<sup>1</sup> For present purposes this makes little difference, for if in accord with Lev. 17.11 the primary reference is to life, its use in the making of covenants or in cultic expiation always required life that was given up through the death of the victim. It is, thus, probable that when Jesus says that the wine means his blood, he is again referring to his imminent death. This interpretation is supported by the use of τὸ ἐκ-<sup>2</sup> χυνομενόν which is frequently used to indicate a violent death. It is worth noting that the participial construction gives it a future reference: "This is my blood . . . which will be poured out."<sup>3</sup> This reference to his death appears to be an interpretation of that death making use of the terminology of

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1. As essentially "life" released, see T. H. Robinson, "My Blood of the Covenant," *Beihefte zur ZAW*, 41 (1925), 235f.; Westcott, *John*, additional note on I John 1.7; Taylor, *Jesus and . . .*, pp. 57, 137, 138; *Mark*, p. 545. As essentially referring to "death," see F. J. Taylor, "Blood," *ThWBB*, p. 33; Behm, *KThWNT*, I, 173; L. Morris, "The Biblical Use of the Term 'Blood,'" *JTS*, New Series, III (1952), 216-27.
  2. Cf. Matt. 23.35 and parallel; Acts 1.18; 22.20; see J. Behm, "ἐκχέω, ἐκχύν(ν)ω," *KThWNT*, II, 465ff.
  3. So Taylor, *Mark*, p. 546.

cultic sacrifice<sup>1</sup> and of the ratification rite of the old covenant. In the Old Testament sacrificial blood is frequently associated with divine forgiveness. In addition to its use in the cult to symbolize expiation of sin (Lev. 4.1-5.11; 16; 17.11)<sup>2</sup> and cleansing (Lev. 14.1ff.), it was used to seal the Sinai covenant (Ex. 24.8) where Yahweh's union with Israel is vividly pictured (Ex. 24.9-11).<sup>3</sup>

Τῆς διαθήκης -- This phrase shows that the shed blood (death) of Jesus was specifically connected with the covenant tradition in Israel.<sup>4</sup> The initial covenant that formed the basis of the community was made valid through the ritual use

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1. ἐκχυνόμενον is taken from the language of the cult and refers to Is. 53.12; see Jeremias, The Eucharistic . . ., p. 148. Cf. contra Lohse, Maertyrer . . ., p. 124f., who writes, "Die Wendung vom Blutvergiessen nimmt nicht die alttestamentlichen Opfervorstellungen auf, sondern bezeichnet nichts anderes als die Hingabe des Lebens fuer die Vielen" (p. 124).
  2. See Behm, KThWNT, I, 175, for a convenient list of citations.
  3. Jeremias, The Eucharistic . . ., pp. 146ff., maintains that the blood of the lamb at the first "Passover" was thought to be expiatory even though it lost this significance later. Also Dalman, Jesus . . ., p. 168, notes that the blood of the paschal lamb had no placular effect at the time of Jesus.
  4. Lohse, Maertyrer . . ., pp. 124, 126, along with others, points out that this phrase involves some difficulty when translated back into Aramaic. He concludes that it is not an original word of Jesus but an explanatory addition of the later Christian community. If this is the case, its inclusion in the Markan and Pauline accounts indicates that it is a very early apostolic interpretation.

of sacrificial blood (Ex. 24.4-8). Subsequently, the covenant theme is recurrent in the history of Israel. Several of its occurrences are especially important for this passage. The Servant of the Lord in Is. 42.6 and 49.8 is given as a "covenant" to the people. When the promised triumphant and lowly king comes in Zech. 9.9f., God also brings liberation to captive Israelites "because of the blood of my covenant with you . . . ." (9.11). And Jeremiah prophesies a new covenant in the coming days which includes the forgiveness of sins (Jer. 31.31-34). Because of the central importance of the covenant to the life and hope of Israel, the reference to Jesus' blood as the "blood of the covenant" is very significant. T. H. Robinson writes that this presents the death of Jesus as "the consummation of the spiritual history of Israel."<sup>1</sup>

ὅτις πολλῶν -- "This is my blood . . . which is poured out for many." Jesus, here interprets his death as being "on behalf of" or "for the sake of" many. The preposition ὅτις is frequently used in the early church for expressing the beneficial effect of the death of Jesus.<sup>2</sup> The word πολλῶν is again to be understood in a wide sense, as was the case in Mark 10.45.

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1. Beihefte zur ZAW, 41 (1925), 233.

2. Full lists of its occurrences in this connection are given by Bultmann, Theology . . ., I, 84f.; Zimmerli and Jeremias, The Servant . . ., p. 95, note 435.

J. Jeremias has investigated the meaning of the word in contemporary usage. He concludes that it does not have "an exclusive meaning (many, but not all) but, as is common in Semitic speech, an inclusive meaning (the sum total, consisting of many). Accordingly the translation of τὸ ἐκχυννόμενον ὑπὲρ πολλῶν has to be: "which is going to be shed for the whole world."<sup>1</sup>

There is general agreement among interpreters that this phrase recalls Isaiah 53.12 where it is said of the Servant that

. . . he poured out his soul to death,  
and was numbered with the transgressors;  
yet he bore the sin of many,  
and made intercession for the transgressors.

The parallels in words and theme seem close enough to make it probable that the theme of the Song lay in the background of the words of Jesus. When this connection is made then it seems clear that part, at least, of the meaning of the words spoken over the cup is that his death will be an expiatory sacrifice rather than a personal self-sacrifice, for sins which will be made vicariously for the sake of all nations. It inaugurates the new covenant and brings the forgiveness of sins.

Finally, it is important to recognize that these actions and words of Jesus are probably more than an acted parable or verbal instructions regarding his imminent death. In the words . . . ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς . . . λάβετε . . . ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς . . .

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1. The Eucharistic . . ., p. 151; "πολλός," KThWNT, VI, 544; Kuhn, The Scrolls . . ., ed. K. Stendahl, p. 80, note 50, strengthens this interpretation with evidence from the Dead Sea Scrolls.



ἐπίοι . . . . (Mk. 14.22-23) it is obvious that Jesus associated the words of interpretation with the immediate distribution of the bread and wine. As numerous scholars have pointed out, this distribution and subsequent eating and drinking of the elements implies a sharing or a participation by the disciples in their significance.<sup>1</sup> This idea is drawn from two observations on contemporary Jewish thought. First, a common meal binds the table companions into a close fellowship. When the bread at a daily meal is blessed and distributed, those who ate it were thought to be recipients of the blessing by the eating. Second, it was a familiar idea to the contemporaries of Jesus that divine gifts were communicated by eating and drinking. It may be concluded that when Jesus pronounces the blessing over the bread and wine, interprets them as seen above, and distributes them to his disciples, "the meaning is that by eating and drinking He gives them a share in the atoning power of His death."<sup>2</sup> This conclusion finds further support in the words of Paul:

The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?  
(I Cor. 10.16)

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1. See C. H. Dodd, A Companion . . ., ed. T. W. Manson, pp. 386f.; Taylor, Jesus and . . ., p. 121; Lohse, Maertyrer . . ., p. 124; Wm. Manson, Jesus . . ., p. 144. For the substance of the material presented here see the more detailed argument of Jeremias, The Eucharistic . . ., pp. 152-59.
  2. Jeremias, The Eucharistic . . ., p. 154.

In summary one may say:

- (1) Jesus interprets his imminent death as a voluntary expiatory sacrifice.
- (2) His death, like that of the Servant of the Lord, is to be for the sake of the world--a vicarious suffering and death for their sin.
- (3) By way of the bread and wine Jesus gave his disciples a share in the expiating power of his death. He gave them assurance of forgiveness and salvation.
- (4) In light of the context of the Jewish Passover which celebrated God's redemption of Israel from Egyptian bondage and in light of Jesus' frequent teaching that his death was in obedience to the will of God, it seems reasonable to assume that both Jesus and the evangelists saw in his death God's act of expiation and forgiveness.

There is little doubt that there are other meanings in the words and actions of Jesus at the last supper,<sup>1</sup> but these are the important ones for the present study of divine forgiveness. This interpretation finds support in the fact that Matthew drew the same conclusion and with a brief addition<sup>2</sup> to the Markan words made it explicit:

Drink of it all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant,  
which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins  
(*εἰς ὑμῶν ἁμαρτιῶν*)"

Matt. 26.27b-28.

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1. See, e.g., Lohmeyer, Markus, pp. 302-10, who holds that the main idea of the meal is that it is an eschatological community of disciples with their Lord. It is a link between his historical presence and the Parousia.
  2. Most commentators agree that this is an explanatory addition by Matthew.

### Conclusions

#### Divine Forgiveness and the Person of Jesus Christ

Jesus is presented as the unique mediator of divine forgiveness.

This he accomplishes by word of mouth, by his actions and by his obedient death. That Jesus implements and embodies divine forgiveness is a recurrent theme (1) in the passages specifically mentioning forgiveness, (2) in the parabolic teaching of Jesus, (3) in the narrative material, (4) in numerous sayings, (5) and in the interpretation of his obedient death.

#### Jesus Teaches and Accomplishes Forgiveness

The evangelists consider this forgiveness to be a matter of information which Jesus taught and a task which he had to accomplish--a deed which he had to do.<sup>1</sup> He taught about the wideness of God's mercy to sinners (the only ones excluded are the self-righteous and those who refused to accept God's grace in Jesus, these exclude themselves); he taught disciples to pray for forgiveness as children petition their father; he taught recipients of forgiveness the necessity of being forgiving to others.

He performed the task or deed of forgiveness not only in his forgiving actions with individuals but primarily in his

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1. Williams, The Forgiveness . . ., p. 50, writes, ". . . Forgiveness is an act, and not a set of words. It is a thing to be done *[italics his]*." W. Kapp, Die Predigt der Suendenvergebung nach ihren religios-sittlichen Beziehungen (Tuebingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1903), p. 20, writes, ". . . in der Lehre sich fuer uns die Bedeutung Christi nicht erschoeft; groesser als seine Lehre ist die That seines Lebens."

obedience to the divine summons to Messiahship via the role of the suffering Servant of II Isaiah. This mission informs his whole ministry; it is seen in the oft recurring theme of rejection on account of his love for sinners and, especially, in his voluntary death. The evangelists present him as one who bears even unto death the suffering and burdens caused by the sins of men; this was done in order that (among other things) men might be forgiven. The prominence in the synoptic gospels of the passion and death of Jesus implies that for the evangelists the cross, in the light of the resurrection, was the supreme deed in overcoming sin and bestowing forgiveness.

#### Divine Forgiveness is Mediated by Jesus at a Cost to Himself

This is one of the obvious themes in these gospels. From the beginning of his ministry, when he forgives the paralytic and gives the reading in the Nazareth synagogue, through to the end the theme of rejection is present. In studying the passages where he is presented as assuring forgiveness to the outcasts it was repeatedly noticed that it cost him time, patience, social prestige, religious standing, the sting of criticism and physical pain. Consequently, it was a consistent ending to his ministry when in ransoming the many it cost him (at least) a violent death.

How can his earlier forgiveness of the paralytic or tax-collectors be said to be dependent upon his subsequent death? The answer appears to lie along two lines. (1) To claim authority to forgive sins was indeed insolence and blasphemy on the part of



Jesus unless he actually had the right to do so. His death in obedient service to God and in loving identification with sinners to the utmost point proved his right to forgive. It gave final assurance to those whom he had forgiven that he truly represented God and that there was not a streak of self-seeking within him.<sup>1</sup>

(2) Secondly, Jesus' entire ministry seems to have lain under the shadow of the cross. He anticipated it early and moved toward it as in obedience to the will of God. Consequently, when the paralytic or anyone else was forgiven, it was a "being-rejected," a "being-crucified" Messiah who forgave them. The ultimate rejection at the cross was the price Jesus paid for bestowing forgiveness even at the beginning of his ministry.

### Jesus Christ is the Guarantee of Forgiveness

Jesus is presented by the evangelists as giving himself to guarantee and substantiate forgiveness. The phrase "to forgive" may be defined as meaning "to cease to feel resentment against, on account of wrong committed; to give up claim to requital on account of (an offense or wrong); to remit the penalty of."<sup>2</sup> As such forgiveness can be largely a subjective matter affecting only the offended party. Yet in the actual experience of forgive-

1. See the good discussion of this point by H. R. Mackintosh, The Christian Experience . . ., pp. 99, 196; Buechsel, KThWNT, IV, 347, writes, "So wird seinen Tod erst das heilige Recht seiner Vergebungszusage sichergestellt."
2. See Webster's New International Dictionary of the English Language, ed. W. A. Neilson, T. A. Knott, P. W. Carhart (2d ed.; unabridged; Springfield, Mass.: G. C. Merriam Co., 1947=1934) p. 991.

ness (both human and divine) the wronged party must so demonstrate his forgiveness that the one forgiven may realize it.<sup>1</sup> Jesus sometimes declares forgiveness in words, yet it is his personal demeanor that gives sure evidence of it to the one forgiven.

Looking back over the synoptic gospels, one is surprised to find so little said specifically about God's forgiveness, yet much is told about the person of Jesus and his relationship to sinners. The reason for this neglect of specific teaching on forgiveness is, apparently, that for the evangelists the personal relationship with Jesus was the essential matter. Forgiveness is guaranteed and embodied for the sinner in Jesus' acceptance (of the sinner), friendship, companionship, identification in suffering and in his death. If the primary penalty of sin is separation from God, then Jesus is portrayed as remitting that penalty. As an envoy from God, the bringer of the kingdom of God, he gives himself to sinners and thereby unites the separated. The person of Jesus becomes the substance of forgiveness. In the interpretation of his death at the last supper it is his own body and blood, himself, that he distributes to penitent and believing sinners. A dictionary definition of forgiveness helps to explain the work of Jesus, yet he remains free of its defining limits and infuses his own content into the idea.

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1. Horace Bushnell, Forgiveness and Law (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1874), pp. 33-48, points this out eloquently, from the point of view of human analogies.

### The Conditions of Divine Forgiveness

First, Jesus is presented as explicitly affirming the necessity of repentance for receiving God's forgiveness. However, his love for sinners is shown to exhibit a certain "heedlessness," as the Pharisees considered it, which befriended and forgave before demanding a complete change of character.

In the second place, faith is recurrently observable in those receiving divine forgiveness. Interpreters have long recognized the close relationship between repentance and faith in the message of Jesus; the two appear together in the report of his first message (Mk. 1.15) and his final commission (Lk. 24.47). It seems clear that repentance falls from its prominent place in Judaism and is progressively comprehended in this wider concept of faith (discipleship).<sup>1</sup> The full meaning of both is preserved in the concept of faith, and both have a definite Christological orientation.

In the third place, there is a condition for maintaining the relationship of forgiveness. One of the strongest emphases in the teaching of Jesus is his insistence upon the necessity for his disciples, who have received the mercy of God, to show merciful pardon to their own offenders. This spirit of "forgiveness" cannot be said to be required by Jesus before granting divine

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1. This may be seen from a brief look at the two terms in a New Testament concordance. See also W. Morgan, "Repentance," HDB, IV, 225f.

pardon,<sup>1</sup> but it is a condition to be met if disciples wish to retain it. His sayings and parable on this are sternly worded. Unless forgiveness is shared it is lost.

### The Scope of Divine Forgiveness

The forgiveness mediated through the actions of Jesus is, of course, rarely seen extended beyond the bounds of Israel. However, in no saying about forgiveness do the evangelists imply that it is limited to any one national or racial group. Rather numerous passages refer to their universal outlook. Luke frequently suggests that the gospel is for the Gentiles or the nations (2.32; 4.23-27; 10.29-37; 17.15-18; 24.47). And the same is implied by Mark in important passages (10.45; 14.24). In addition to the passages where Jesus commends the faith of Samaritans, Roman soldiers, a Greek (a Syrophenician by birth), etc. the evangelists imply a universal forgiveness in their presentation of the person of Jesus. He inaugurates the kingdom of God, and as such his work is unlimited in its scope. The resurrection confirms this interpretation for the disciples; Matthew's report of the final commission reads significantly: "ΠΟΡΕΥΘΕΝΤΕΣ ΟΥΝ ΜΑΘΗΤΕΥΣΑΤΕ ΠΑΝΤΑ ΤΑ ἔθνη . . ." (28.19a).

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1. Cf. contra Redlich, The Forgiveness . . ., p. 126, who writes "This essay is an effort to restore human forgiveness to its rightful position as a condition which must be fulfilled either separately or as an element of repentance before God's forgiveness can be granted . . . ."



Divine Forgiveness as an Eschatological  
Gift

The evangelists clearly imply that the kingdom of God and the fulfillment of the eschatological age (of Israel's hope) are presented as having broken in upon history in the person and ministry of Jesus Christ. The divine forgiveness which Jesus mediates must be viewed from this perspective. Those who enter that kingdom by receiving Jesus in faith have been eternally forgiven. They know forgiveness in the present and will at the conclusion of the age for in the kingdom of God they are participants in the end-time.

Of course, this forgiveness is not an inalienable "possession" but a spiritual relationship with the risen Christ; it can be despised by subsequent refusal to extend such forgiveness to others. This tension of freedom (one is eternally forgiven) and subjection (one must persistently forgive) is an indication that Gospel and Law are inseparably united in the faith of the evangelists.

## CHAPTER IV

### TESTIMONY CONCERNING DIVINE FORGIVENESS IN THE KERYGMA IN ACTS

We now turn to the message preached by the disciples in the days immediately following the death and resurrection of Jesus. What is their understanding of divine forgiveness at that time? For the answer we look to the first part of the Acts of the Apostles. These early chapters, as Foakes-Jackson and Lake point out, are our "main authority for the history of the disciples in Jerusalem,"<sup>1</sup> and the speeches which are reported in them are our chief source for the beliefs of the early Jerusalem church.

Since Acts was not written or compiled until the latter part of the first century and because of other reasons, there have been some who have questioned the historical reliability of Luke's<sup>2</sup> reports of these speeches.<sup>3</sup> H. J. Cadbury, for example, concludes that the missionary speeches "attest the simple theological outlook conceived to have been original by at least one Christian

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1. The Beginnings . . ., I, 301.
  2. The probable author. See the discussion by G. H. C. Macgregor, "The Exegesis of Acts," Inter. Bible, IX, 3-21.
  3. See H. J. Cadbury, "The Speeches in Acts," The Beginnings . . ., ed. Foakes-Jackson and Lake, V, 402-27.

of the obscure period at which Acts was written."<sup>1</sup> Of course, there is no doubt that Luke's own interpretations, literary style and intention to proclaim the gospel<sup>2</sup> have left their imprint on his reporting. Yet this does not destroy their basic fidelity nor their authority as sources for determining the message of the early church. Numerous reasons, which need not be repeated here,<sup>3</sup> make it probable that they accurately reflect the essential elements of the early missionary speeches. F. J. Foakes-Jackson writes, "Luke seems to have been able to give us an extraordinarily accurate picture of the undeveloped theology of the earliest Christians, and to enable us to determine the character of the most primitive presentation of the gospel."<sup>4</sup> In his now famous work, The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments, C. H. Dodd made a study of the reports of the speeches of Peter--2.14-36, 38f.;

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1. Ibid., p. 427.
  2. On this purpose see M. Dibelius, Studies in the Acts of the Apostles, trans. Mary Ling, ed. H. Greeven (New York: Chas. Scribner's, 1956), pp. 138-85, especially p. 183.
  3. See F. F. Bruce, Acts, pp. 18ff.; C. C. Torrey, The Composition and Date of Acts (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1916), pp. 3-41; H. C. Kee and F. W. Young, Understanding the New Testament (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1957) pp. 52f.; A. M. Hunter, Interpreting the New Testament 1900-1950 (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1951), pp. 105-108, 111.
  4. The Acts of the Apostles ("The Moffatt New Testament Commentary"; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1931), p. xvi. See also Taylor, The Atonement . . ., pp. 17f.

3.12-26; 4.8-12; 5.29-32; 10.34-43. He concludes: "We may with some confidence take these speeches to represent, not indeed what Peter said upon this or that occasion, but the kerygma (message) of the Church at Jerusalem at an early period."<sup>1</sup>

Dodd's analysis of the kerygma shows that it consistently contained a proclamation of certain events and an interpretation of those events. In brief outline the message is first that

the age of fulfilment has dawned . . . . Secondly, this has taken place through the ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus . . . . Thirdly, by virtue of the resurrection, Jesus has been exalted to the right hand of God, as Messianic head of the new Israel. . . . Fourthly, the Holy Spirit in the Church is the sign of Christ's present power and glory . . . . Fifthly, the Messianic age will shortly reach its consummation in the return of Christ . . . . Finally, the kerygma always closes with an appeal for repentance, the offer of forgiveness and of the Holy Spirit, and the promise of 'salvation,' that is 'the life of the Age to Come' to those who enter the elect community.<sup>2</sup>

Let us look more specifically at these appeals in the kerygma which contain references to the forgiveness of sins.

1. Following the report of the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the community in Acts 2.1-13, there is the explanatory address by Peter to the assembled Jews (2.14-36, 38f.). This address contains most of the elements of the kerygma listed above.<sup>3</sup>

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1. (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1936), p. 37.

2. Ibid., pp. 38-43.

3. The only omission is the reference to the return of Christ.



The appeal reads:

Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins (ἐν ὀνόματι τοῦ ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ ὑμῶν); and you shall receive the Holy Spirit.

2.38

The forgiveness of sins is here connected closely with both the call to repent and to be baptized. Repentance in the context of this speech has its usual meaning<sup>1</sup> with possibly the primary reference being to a change of mind and attitude toward Jesus whom the people had rejected and killed. If so, it would not be very different from the early professions of faith in him.

Baptism is here seen to be a sign both of forgiveness and the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is performed ἐπὶ (ἐν) τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ. H. Bietenhard sums up the biblical teaching when he writes that

Die Fuelle von Jesu Christi Wesen und Wirken zeigt sich in seinen 'Namen' . . . Die Taufe auf den Namen bedeutet, dass der Täufling durch die Gemeinschaft mit dem mit Gott geeinten Sohn die Vergebung empfaengt und unter die Wirksamkeit des Heiligen Geistes tritt.<sup>2</sup>

Since Jesus used the image of baptism to help interpret his death and since the conception of the suffering Servant of Isaiah appears to inform this whole speech,<sup>3</sup> it is reasonable

1. See J. Behm, "μετανοέω, κ.τ.λ.," KThWNT, IV, 999.

2. "ὄνομα," KThWNT, V, 272, 274.

3. Note the emphasis on humiliation in death, exaltation by God, fulfilment of supreme service for men. See Taylor, The Atonement . . . , p. 18.

to infer that the early Jerusalem preaching was not far from the explicit Hellenistic kerygma: "Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures" (I Cor. 15.3).

The offer of this forgiveness is to the Jerusalem Jews and others whom Peter accused of rejecting and killing Jesus (2.23). Presumably, therefore, the forgiveness offered would refer to that sin primarily. Other sins would be forgiven but seem to be secondary in this context.

The implication is that this forgiveness is immediately available upon repentance and baptism. The gift of the Spirit to the disciples was a present phenomenon and served as a sign to the observers that forgiveness could also be a realized fact for them.

In his account of the Pentecost event Luke clearly implies its international significance (cf. 2.5-11, 17, 21, 39). It seems clear, therefore, that he wished to indicate that a universal offer of forgiveness was, at least, incipient in this offer of Peter to the Jews. However, the great struggle over this question was yet to come (see Acts 6-11).

2. After Peter healed the lame man near the temple, a crowd gathered in Solomon's portico. His speech on that occasion (3.12-26) contains four of the six kerygmatic elements named above. Its appeal reads:

Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out (πρὸς τὸ ἐξαλειφθῆναι ὑμῶν τὰς ἁμαρτίας), that times of refreshing may come from the presence of

the Lord, (20) and that he may send the Christ appointed for you . . . .

3.19f.

Again the exhortation to repent and turn again appears to have primary reference to the ignorant action and attitude which rejected and killed the Author of life. If so, such repentance is again closely kin to faith in Christ and leads to (πρὸς τὸ with the infinitive denotes purpose)<sup>1</sup> forgiveness. Ἐξαλείφω, meaning to "wipe away," is often used in the LXX with ἁμαρτίας or ἁνομιίας as a metaphor for forgiveness.<sup>2</sup> The picture is of a complete erasure of the barriers which sins have raised. The reference to the "times of refreshing," that is, the Messiah's return and consummation,<sup>3</sup> indicates that the forgiveness offered in Jesus also has an eschatological efficacy.

It is very important to observe that in this speech Christ is referred to as the "servant" of God (παῖς , 3.13,26; cf. also 4.27, 30).<sup>4</sup> J. Jeremias<sup>5</sup> and others<sup>6</sup> hold that these

1. See Moulton, A Grammar . . . , I, 218-20.

2. See Ps. 50 (51).1,9; Is. 43.25; etc.

3. So F. F. Bruce, Acts, p. 91; R. R. Williams, The Acts of the Apostles ("Torch Bible Commentaries"; London: SCM Press, 1953), p. 55; R. B. Rackham, The Acts of the Apostles (10th. ed.; London: Methuen and Co., 1925), p. 53; H. J. Cadbury and K. Lake, The Beginnings . . . , IV, 37.

4. See also Acts 8.32ff. where this connection is made by Philip representing the Hellenistic wing of the church.

5. Zimmerli and Jeremias, The Servant . . . , pp. 85f.

6. Ibid., p. 86, note 381; Macgregor, Inter. Bible, IX, 57f.

indicate that in this early preaching Jesus was identified with the suffering servant of God of Isaiah 42 and 53.

It may thus be inferred that, although the Jerusalem kerygma does not say outright that the death of Christ was for sins, this connection was inchoate from the earliest times.<sup>1</sup> It is reasonable to assume that the implications of Jesus' having adopted the role of the Isaianic servant would not be fully worked out in the enthusiasm of the first weeks after Pentecost.

3. The third kerygmatic passage is the brief reply of Peter at the examination of him by the rulers, elders and high priestly family (4.8b-12). He concludes with the assertion that there is salvation (ἡ σωτηρία) in the name of Jesus and in no one else. This salvation probably refers both to the healing of the lame man (vs. 9) and also to spiritual wholeness. Of the latter, forgiveness would presumably be a part.<sup>2</sup>

4. The fourth kerygmatic passage is the reply of Peter and the apostles to the Sanhedrin on the occasion of their second arrest and trial (5.29-32). They testified that this Jesus whom the council had put to death had been vindicated by God.

God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins  
(τοῦ δοῦναι μετάνοιαν . . . καὶ ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν).  
5.31

1. See Dodd, According to . . ., pp. 92, 118, 123f.

2. Cf. Acts 2.21, 40, 47. See F. F. Bruce, Acts, p. 101.



Here the resurrection and exaltation of Christ has the purpose (τοῦ δοῦναι ) of bestowing repentance and forgiveness. That repentance is given by God (cf. 3.26) is not an idea which originated with the early church,<sup>1</sup> but it is evidence of the comprehensiveness of the gift of God in Christ. That it should go to "Israel" first is in keeping with the context (a speech by Peter). It gives evidence of the early date of this material, for Luke is obviously interested in the international efficacy of the gospel and is not likely to have invented such a saying as this.

5. The final example of the Jerusalem kerygma is found in the speech attributed to Peter in the house of Cornelius, a Roman centurion (10.34-43). The address contains most of the six basic elements of the kerygma and concludes with the words:

To him all the prophets bear witness that every one who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name (ἀρεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν λαβεῖν διὰ τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτοῦ).  
10.43

Forgiveness of sins is again conceived of as being mediated through the totality of the Christ-event (διὰ τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτοῦ). The wide offer of forgiveness-- πάντα τὸν πιστεύοντα --is one of the recurrent notes of Luke-Acts and possibly the major reason for Luke's recording this episode about Cornelius.

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1. Cf. Sibylline Oracles 4.168.

Forgiveness is given to all who are believing εἰς αὐτόν .

The reference is to continual reliance upon and submission to Jesus Christ as the risen Lord. This is the first specific indication in the early preaching that forgiveness comes through faith in Jesus. However, as R. J. Knowling comments,<sup>1</sup> essentially the same note was sounded in the Pentecost speech (Acts. 2.38).

6. It is important to observe that the same elements found in the Jerusalem preaching in the early chapters of Acts recur in Paul's speech at Antioch of Pisidia (13.16-41). And the conclusion of his address reads:

Let it be known to you therefore, brethren, that through this man forgiveness of sins (ἀφεσις ἁμαρτιῶν) is proclaimed to you (39) and by him every one that believes is freed (δικαιοῦται) from everything from which you could not be freed (δικαιωθῆναι) by the law of Moses.  
13.38f.

Here forgiveness is mediated through Jesus, whom God had sent to fulfill his promises to Israel by his death and resurrection. A characteristic Pauline touch is added with the inclusion of the concept of justification.

7. There are other specific references to divine forgiveness which appear in Acts outside the kerygmatic passages,<sup>2</sup>

1. "The Acts of the Apostles," Exp. Grk. Test., II, 261.
2. Cf. Acts 7.60 (Stephen's prayer); 8.22 (Peter's rebuke to Simon); 22.16 (Paul's defense before the Jerusalem mob includes this word of Ananias to Paul); 26.18 (Paul before Agrippa tells of Jesus' words to him in the vision on the Damascus road).

but these do not make further contribution to that which has already been observed.

#### Summary

1. The terms for forgiveness used in the kerygma show a close relationship to those used in the synoptic gospels.
2. The offer of forgiveness is a constituent part of the proclamation of the kerygma by the early church.
3. Forgiveness is mediated through Christ, who was crucified, raised and exalted in accordance with the Scriptures. It is not actually said that Jesus died "for sins" but references to him as the "servant" of God allow this inference.
4. Repentance and faith in Christ are prerequisites for forgiveness.
5. Forgiveness is accompanied and assured by the gift of the Holy Spirit.
6. It is signified and sealed by the physical rite of water baptism.
7. It is effective in the present time; it is offered to all; and its erasure of sins is all inclusive.
8. The resurrection gives eternal continuity to forgiveness. Bestowed one day, it is not denied the next nor at the End.
9. Forgiveness is not the whole of God's gifts in Jesus Christ. Others are mentioned: the Holy Spirit, salvation, "times of refreshing," etc.



CHAPTER V

TESTIMONY CONCERNING DIVINE FORGIVENESS  
IN PAULINE THEOLOGY

Introduction

As sources for Paul's theology use will be made of Romans, I-II Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians and I-II Thessalonians and Philemon. Ephesians, Colossians and II Thessalonians are often ascribed to other authors. However, Paul's thought is considered fundamental to them<sup>1</sup> and, therefore, whether written by him or a close disciple, they will be taken into account in this investigation. It is generally accepted that the Pastoral Epistles (I-II Timothy and Titus) were written after Paul's time.<sup>2</sup> They will be considered separately.

It is necessary to assert two assumptions upon which this investigation rests. First, Paul is to be interpreted primarily

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1. On Ephesians see the recent discussion by F. W. Beare, "Ephesians," Inter. Bible, X, 597ff. On Colossians see F. W. Beare, "Colossians," Inter. Bible, XI, 133ff. On II Thessalonians see John W. Bailey, Inter Bible, XI, 249f.
  2. See P. N. Harrison, The Problem of the Pastoral Epistles (Humphrey Milford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1921).



(though not exclusively) from his Jewish background.<sup>1</sup> This is now widely recognized. Secondly, he was a Jew who believed that the Messiah had come, i.e., that the Messianic Age of Jewish expectation had broken into history. W. D. Davies writes that the center of Paul's thought

is to be found . . . in his awareness that with the coming of Christ the Age to Come had become a present fact the proof of which was the advent of the Spirit; it lies in those conceptions of standing under the judgment and mercy of a New Torah, Christ, of dying and rising with that same Christ, of undergoing a New Exodus in Him and of so being incorporated into a New Israel, the community of the Spirit.<sup>2</sup>

The new age had penetrated into history, yet for Paul there still remained the future consummation.<sup>3</sup> R. Bultmann writes:

The salvation-occurrence [viz. God's sending of Christ, and especially, his death and resurrection] is the eschatological occurrence which puts to end the old aeon. Though Paul still expects the end of the old world to come as a cosmic drama that will unfold with the imminent parousia of Christ (I Thess. 4.16; I Cor. 15.23, 51f.; etc.), that can only be the completion and confirmation of the eschatological occurrence that has now already begun.<sup>4</sup>

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1. See Davies, Paul . . . ; and the discussion by Hunter, Interpreting the New Testament . . . , 69ff.
  2. Paul . . . , 223.
  3. Johannes Munck, Paulus und die Heilsgeschichte (Copenhagen: Ejnar Munksgaard, 1954), pp. 1-60, emphasizes that Paul considered his own apostolate to the Gentiles to be a prerequisite to that consummation.
  4. Theology . . . , I, 306f.

### Survey of Specific References to Forgiveness

Most of the specific terms and metaphors for God's forgiveness which occurred in the synoptic gospels also appear in Paul's writings. The following will be examined:

- |               |                           |
|---------------|---------------------------|
| 1. ἀφίημι     | 4. χαρίζομαι              |
| 2. ἄφεσις     | 5. μὴ λογιζομαι           |
| 3. ἀφαιρέω    | 6. ἱλαστήριον (& πάρεσις) |
| 7. ἐπικαλύπτω |                           |

The Verb ἀφίημι (parallel, ἐπικαλύπτω )

This is used only once by Paul with the meaning "forgive."

Blessed are those whose iniquities are forgiven (ἀφέθησαν),  
and whose sins are covered (ἐπεκαλύφθησαν);  
blessed is the man against whom  
the Lord will not reckon his sin.

Rom. 4.7f.

Paul's argument in 4.1-12 is that Abraham was counted as righteous on the basis of his faith, not his merit. Having cited the passage from Gen. 15.6 in support, he illuminates it with this passage from Ps. 32.1f. (LXX).<sup>1</sup> The emphasis of the argument is on justification by faith alone. Therefore, it is clear that the forgiveness, "covering" or "not reckoning," of sin is closely connected to being "reckoned as righteous."<sup>2</sup> Whether or not "for-

1. Paul here employs a Rabbinical exegetical principle: when the same word ("reckon") is used in two separate passages, each can be used to illuminate the other. See C. K. Barrett, A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans (London: A. & C. Black, 1957), p. 89.
2. Some commentators hold that they are equivalent. See Anders Nygren, Commentary on Romans, trans. C. C. Rasmussen (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1949), pp. 167-84, esp. 171; Barrett, Romans, 89.

givenness of sins" and "justification" are synonymous terms is yet to be determined. Suffice it here to note that forgiveness, like justification, is a blessing bestowed by God and conditioned by faith alone.

### The Noun ἄφεσις

This occurs twice in the letters of Paul. In Colossians:

He [God] has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins (τὴν ἄφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν).

Col. 1.13f.

The most important point here is the connection between forgiveness and the person of Jesus Christ. It is in him (ἐν ᾧ)<sup>1</sup> that we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. Since these are present continuous possessions (ἔχοντες),<sup>2</sup> F.W. Beare's comment is correct:

It is to be noted that in these verses the apostolic writer speaks of the saving acts of God as already accomplished. The kingdom of his Son is a present reality; our rescue from the realm of darkness and our translation into Christ's kingdom of love are not matters of expectation but realized facts.<sup>3</sup>

1. Martin Dibelius, An die Kolossen, Ephesen, An Philemon "Handbuch zum Neuen Testament"; 2d ed.; Tuebingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1927), p. 6, says that this refers to Christ as the accomplisher of the work of salvation and not a reference to faith-union as in the formula, ἐν Χριστῷ.
2. It would make no material difference if we read the aorist tense with the Vaticanus uncial. The prayer of thanksgiving (vss. 12f.) is for present blessings resulting from the definitive activity of God in the past (ἐκάνωκεν, ἐποίησεν).
3. Inter. Bible, XI, 161.

And in Ephesians there is the verse:

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses (τὴν ἀφεσιν τῶν παραπτωμάτων), according to the riches of his grace which he lavished upon us.

Eph. 1.7f.

This verse is, of course, very similar to the previous one noted. Again forgiveness is a present possession,<sup>1</sup> and it is in Jesus Christ (ἐν ᾧ) that this possession is realized.

The Verb ἀφαιρέω

This is used once as a metaphor for forgiveness.

The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob; and this will be my covenant with them when I take away (ἀφείλωμαι) their sins.

Rom. 11.26b-27.

Here again Paul is quoting from the LXX. Drawing from two passages in Isaiah (59.20f. and 27.9)<sup>2</sup> he gives scriptural support for the ultimate salvation of all Israel.<sup>3</sup> Very little can be concluded from this reference. We may only note the implication that God's mercy is exceedingly wide. Though the Jews had been stubborn and had rejected his grace in Jesus Christ, yet God would be faithful to his covenant which included even for them a "gratuitous remission of sin."<sup>4</sup>

1. Sinaiticus and Bezae have the aorist tense here, but the context shows that reading with them would not change the meaning.
2. See Barrett, Romans, p. 224; C. H. Dodd, The Epistle of Paul to the Romans ("The Moffatt New Testament Commentary"; New York: R. Long and R. R. Smith, 1932), p. 182; John Knox, "Romans," Inter. Bible, IX, 575.
3. So Knox, Inter. Bible, IX, 575; and others.
4. John Calvin, Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans, trans. and ed. John Owen (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1955), p. 439.



## The Verb χαρίζομαι

This is a more frequent Pauline term for forgiveness. It is used numerous times with either God or man as the subject to mean "give freely," "to deal graciously with,"<sup>1</sup> "bestow," or "forgive." Referring to God's forgiveness it appears three times (Col. 2.13; 3.13; Eph. 4.32).

The first occurrence in Colossians is in the following passage:

For in him the whole fulness of deity dwells bodily, (10) and you have come to fulness of life in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. (11) In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of flesh in the circumcision of Christ; (12) and you were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead. (13) And you, who were dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses (χαρίζμενος ἡμῖν πάντα τὰ παραπτώματα), (14) having canceled the bond which stood against us with its legal demands; this he set aside, nailing it to the cross.

Col. 2.9-14.

Against the background of the Colossian heresy<sup>2</sup> Paul argues that his readers need nothing further than is supplied in Christ in whom dwells πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα τῆς θεότητος σωματικῶς. He lists the blessings that are theirs, since they have been made alive with Christ through faith sealed in baptism. Among other gifts is the forgiveness of trespasses. This is probably to be taken as

1. Taylor, Forgiveness . . ., p. 5, holds this to be the proper meaning. Its being used to mean "forgive" is very natural, as James Moffatt, Grace in the New Testament (New York: Ray Long and Richard R. Smith, 1932), p. 101, points out.
2. See Beare, Inter. Bible, XI, 191-99; E. F. Scott, The Epistles of Paul to the Colossians, to Philemon and to the Ephesians ("The Moffatt New Testament Commentary"; New York: Harper & Brothers, 1930) pp. 40-50, for a presentation of the argument in light of the heresy.

coincident with the <sup>6</sup>συνζωοποίησεν (vs. 13) and as an expression of its realization.<sup>1</sup> Ernst Lohmeyer<sup>2</sup> is right in pointing out that all these blessings are dependent upon and resultant from the death and resurrection of Jesus (cf. συνταφέντες , συνεχέρθητε , εχείραντος , συνεζωοποίησεν , προσηλώσας ). The forgiveness is comprehensive (πάντα τὰ παρ. ); it would appear to include all past offenses.

This passage gives an illustration of the way in which Paul's Gospel exceeded the forgiveness of sins. There is, in addition, the bestowing of life with Christ (vs. 13), the canceling of the demands of legalism (vs. 14) and victory over evil powers (vs. 15).

The other occurrences of *χρίζομαι* in Colossians and Ephesians are found in similar passages in similar contexts:

(12) Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, and patience, (13) forbearing one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven (ἐχάρισατο) you, so you also must forgive.  
Col. 3.12f.

(31) Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, with all malice, (32) and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave (ἐχάρισατο) you.  
Eph. 4.31f.

These passages are found in the hortatory parts of the epistles. Urging the readers to forgive one another, Paul indicates

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1. So Moulton, *A Grammar . . .*, I, 130f.; A. Oepke, "*βάπτω*," *KThWNT*, I, 540n.
  2. *Die Briefe an die Philipper . . .*, p. 111.

that the pattern and the motivation for doing so lies in the historical fact that they have been forgiven by "God in Christ" or by the risen and exalted *κύριος*.<sup>1</sup>

He writes that Christ *ἐχαρίσατο ὑμῖν*. This aorist with *ὑμῖν* indicates that there had been an inclusive, definitive act in the past (closely connected to the death of Jesus, Col. 2.9 - 3.12) which had full significance for the contemporary readers.<sup>2</sup> On the basis of this, as G. Bindemann writes, "ist es fuer den Apostel selbstverstaendlich, dass die im Glauben empfangene Gnade die Liebe hervorrufft."<sup>3</sup> This is the familiar Pauline sequence. The ethical imperative to the disciples rests on the aorist indicatives which declare God's acts in men's behalf. One cannot fail to notice the resemblance of these two passages to the teaching of Jesus in the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant (Matt. 18.23ff.). There God's initial forgiveness was seen to be the motivation and command for the servant's subsequent forgiveness toward his fellows. The servant must respond to his Lord's lead. "Der Herr," writes E. Lohmeyer, "ist die unbedingte Norm jedes glaeubigen Lebens . . . ."<sup>4</sup>

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1. Reading with p<sup>46</sup>, B, A, D\*, G, pc, lat.

2. So Beare, Inter. Bible, XI, 219.

3. Das Gebet um . . ., p. 104.

4. Die Briefe an die Philipper . . ., p. 147. He further points out that this is not asking the impossible of disciples nor is the comparison of the human with the divine act of forgiveness unreasonable since the context so emphasizes the disciples' unity with Christ. The Christian no longer acts independently; the source of his action is in the divine deed.



The Phrase *μὴ λογίζομαι*

1

This is twice used in the sense of forgive. The first is found in a quotation from the LXX (Rom. 4.8) which we have previously noted (p. 262). The second occurs in a section of II Corinthians where Paul sets forth his apostolic ministry and message (2.14-6.10). The familiar verse reads:

... that is, God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them (*μὴ λογίζομενος αὐτοῖς τὰ παραπτώματα αὐτῶν*), and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

5.19

The whole race of men (*κόσμον*)<sup>2</sup> is included in this action of God. He was reconciling them and refused to "count" their sins against them. As Floyd V. Filson comments, the picture intended by *μὴ λογίζομενος* is that "God did not keep the record of these misdeeds on the books as a debit charge; he forgave them."<sup>3</sup>

It is clearly apparent that Jesus Christ is here considered the agent of God's reconciling and forgiving action (5.17-19). Moreover, his death and resurrection are the immediate background (5.14, 15, 21). The apostle does not say precisely how this bears on reconciliation and forgiveness, but, as often he thinks of the two together.

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1. See H. W. Heidland, "*λογίζομαι*," *KThWNT*, IV, 295.
  2. H. Sasse, "*κόσμος*," *KThWNT*, III, 893, writes "Mit *κόσμος* ist . . . *Menschenwelt*, *Menschheit* gemeint." He places this use of the term under the general heading of "*κόσμος* als *Menschheit*, *gefallene Schoepfung*, *Schauplatz der Heilsgeschichte*," p. 889.
  3. "II Corinthians," *Inter. Bible*, X, 341. The metaphor is taken from the commercial world. See the many examples given by Moulton and Milligan under *λογίζομαι*, in *VGT*.



Reconciliation and the forgiveness of trespasses are set in parallel structure in this passage, yet they may not be interpreted as synonymous terms (p. 302 below).

### The Terms ἱλαστήριον and πάρεσις

These may be discussed together. They both occur in the important declaration of Romans 3.21-26:

But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from law, although the law and the prophets bear witness to it, (22) the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction; (23) since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, (24) they are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, (25) whom God put forward as an expiation (ἱλαστήριον) by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness because in his divine forbearance he had passed over (πάρεσιν) former sins; (26) it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies him who has faith in Jesus.

This passage has been widely discussed. The verse that is important for our study is verse 25 and C. K. Barrett is right when he notes: "There is scarcely a word in this statement that could not give rise to long discussion."<sup>1</sup> Does it refer to divine forgiveness? If so, what does it say about it? To answer these requires a close look at the verse.

Verse 25 is a relative clause (ὃν προέθετο κ.τ.λ.) descriptive of Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ and, indirectly, of the ἀπολυτρώσεως which immediately precedes it.

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1. Romans, p. 77.

προέθετο in the aorist middle should be translated "set forth, publicly,"<sup>1</sup> in view of the uses of εἰς ἔνδειξιν and the general context.

ἱλαστήριον is a rare word in the New Testament. Its one other occurrence is in Hebrew 9.5 where it undoubtedly refers to the "mercy seat" within the Holy of Holies of the Temple (cf. Ex. 25.17ff.). The essential idea underlying this term is not in doubt. The older use of such terms as "placate" or "propitiate" (cf. the A. V.) is no longer tenable. C. H. Dodd<sup>2</sup> has proved that, contrary to non-biblical Greek, ἱλάσκεσθαι and its cognates in the LXX have to do with "performing an act whereby guilt or defilement is removed." Of ἱλαστήριον in this passage in Romans he writes, "The meaning conveyed (in accordance with LXX usage, which is determinative for Paul) is that of expiation, not of propitiation."<sup>3</sup> This, of course, is not to deny the reality of God's wrath on sin which must be averted, but it allows a clearer affirmation that God takes the initiative in his mercy.<sup>4</sup>

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1. So Barrett, Romans, p. 77. Recent commentators have agreed. However, see C. A. Anderson Scott, Christianity According to St. Paul (Cambridge: Univ. Press, 1927), pp. 59ff.
  2. The Bible . . ., pp. 82ff.
  3. Ibid., pp. 94f. Barrett, Romans, p. 77f., writes, "We can hardly doubt (since Paul says that God set forth Christ in this capacity) that expiation rather than propitiation is in his mind; though it would be wrong to neglect the fact that expiation has, as it were, the effect of propitiation: the sin that might justly have excited God's wrath is expiated (at God's will), and therefore no longer does so."
  4. See Leon Morris, "The Use of ἱλάσκεσθαι, etc. in Biblical Greek," ET, LXII (May, 1951), 227-33.

Beyond this general idea of expiation, it is difficult to determine precisely what Paul has in mind. There has been much discussion on the point. G. A. Deissmann<sup>1</sup> and Vincent Taylor<sup>2</sup> and others have held that ἱλαστήριον has an adjectival use. It modifies ὃν and refers to Jesus as the "means of expiation." F. Buechsel,<sup>3</sup> on the other hand, would identify the term with the  $\text{סִיּוֹן}$  (mercy seat, Ex. 25.17) which it often renders in the LXX.<sup>4</sup> Along the same lines, T. W. Manson<sup>5</sup> forcefully argues that in the LXX it refers not only to the mercy seat but more generally to the place where ἱλάσκεσθαι takes place. He and others think that Paul had the ceremony of the Day of Atonement in mind. Therefore, he suggests that ἱλαστήριον has here the meaning that Christ crucified was "the place where God's mercy was supremely manifested."<sup>6</sup> We need not enter this very technical discussion.

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1. Bible Studies, trans. A. Grieve (Edinburgh: T and T. Clark, 1901), pp. 124ff.
  2. "Great Texts Reconsidered: Rom. 3.25f.," ET, L (1938/39), 296. See also Dodd, Romans, pp. 54f.; RSV translators.
  3. "ἱλαστήριον," KThWNT, III, 321f.
  4. For the significance of the mercy-seat in the Old Testament and in later Judaism see Strack-Bill., III, 165-79. They describe it as the place of God's presence, of divine revelation, of expiation, and the holiest place in the Holy of Holies.
  5. "ἱΛΑΣΤΗΡΙΟΝ," JTS, XLVI (Jan.-Apr., 1945), 1ff.
  6. For a good review of the discussion see Davies, Paul . . ., pp. 237ff.



The salient point which emerges from it is that Jesus Christ was put forward either as a "means of expiation" (since ὁ Θεὸς is the subject of the expiation, "means of forgiveness")<sup>1</sup> or as the "place of expiation (or) forgiving mercy."

διὰ πίστεως goes with ἱλαστήριον or προέθετο and not with the subsequent phrase.<sup>2</sup> It is faith that receives the forgiveness of God in Christ. ἐν τῷ αὐτοῦ αἵματι also goes with ἱλαστήριον or with ὃν προέθετο... ἱλαστήριον and is certainly sacrificial in its significance. J. Behm's general observation is applicable here also:

Das Interesse des NT haftet nicht an dem Blute Christi als Stoff, sondern an seinem vergossen Blut, dem ihm gewaltsam genommenen Leben; 'Blut Christi' ist wie 'Kreuz' nur ein anderer, anschaulicherer Ausdruck fuer den Tod Christi in seiner Heilsbedeutung.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, it was the crucified Christ who was the agency or place of forgiveness.

Verse 25b: "This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins; . . ." The term πᾶρεσις is used only this once in the Greek Bible, and its occurrences outside are few.<sup>4</sup> In these it has various meanings: "dismissal, paralysis, remission (of debts), ne-

1. So Dodd, Romans, p. 55.

2. So Taylor, ET, L (1938-39), 296.

3. "αἷμα," KThWNT, I, 173.

4. See the complete list given by W. Bauer, A Greek-English Lexicon of New Testament Greek and Other Early Christian Literature, trans. and adapt. W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1957).



glect." The question is whether or not it is here to be equated with ἄφεσις . If not, what is the distinction?

The classic discussion of the two terms is that of R. C. Trench.<sup>1</sup> His conclusion is that whereas ἄφεσις is full and complete remission or forgiveness of sins, παράσις is a lesser benefit. It is the "passing by" (in accord with παρὶναι) of sin, "the suspension of its punishment, the not shutting up of all ways of mercy against the sinner, the giving to him of space and helps for repentance . . . ." <sup>2</sup> Since Trench wrote, Lietzmann,<sup>3</sup> R. Bultmann,<sup>4</sup> and Moulton and Milligan<sup>5</sup> have held that παράσις was practically synonymous with ἄφεσις . This conclusion was largely based on a quotation from Dionysius of Halicarnassus (Ant. Rom., VII, c. xxxvii) which seemed to equate the two. However, J. M. Creed<sup>6</sup> has in more recent years examined the passage. He demonstrates that when the quotation is interpreted in its context, it strongly supports Archbishop Trench's differen-

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1. Synonyms of the New Testament (11th. ed.; London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1890), pp. 114ff.

2. Ibid., p. 119.

3. Einfuehrung in die Textgeschichte der Paulusbriefe an die Roemer ("Handbuch zum Neuen Testament"; 4th ed.; Tuebingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1933), p. 51.

4. KThWNT, I, 508.

5. See their discussions of παράσις , in VGT.

6. "ΠΑΡΕΞΙΣ in Dionysius of Halicarnassus and in St. Paul," JTS, XLI (1940) 28ff.

tiation between the two terms. Creed writes: "In the light of this evidence taken as a whole, we conclude that 'passing over' not 'remission' or 'forgiveness' is likely to be the true meaning of *πάρεσις* in Romans iii.25."<sup>1</sup> With this conclusion other recent commentators agree.<sup>2</sup>

*τῶν προγεγονότων ἁμαρτημάτων* could refer to the sins of men before the "putting forth" of Christ or to the past sins of the people in Paul's own day. The repeated reference to the present time--"*Νυνὶ δὲ* (vs. 21) . . . *ἐν τῷ νῦν καιρῷ* (vs.26) . . ."<sup>3</sup>--probably refers to the time inaugurated by the work of Christ. Thus former sins would seem to refer to those "passed over" prior to the advent of Jesus.<sup>3</sup>

In drawing a conclusion we may note that the whole passage (3.21-26) indicates that in answer to man's desperate need (Rom. 1.18-3.20) God has provided a righteousness apart from the law. It is a *δωρεάν* which is given simply on the basis of faith in Jesus Christ (3.22,26). All have sinned yet they are put in right relationship to God by grace through faith.

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1. *Ibid.*, p. 30.

2. E.g., Barrett, *Romans*, p. 79; Knox, *Inter. Bible*, IX, 434.

3. See Taylor, *ET*, L, 299. Knox, *Inter. Bible*, IX, 434, comments that the meaning here is that God's ignoring of "man's previous sinning would have been impossible (because morally inadmissible) if it had not been for the fact that all the time the death of Christ, which was 'sufficient for the sins of the whole world' (past, present, future) was present in the purpose and foreknowledge of God."

How is this possible when God is holy and righteous?

Verses 24b-25 appear to answer this question. It is made possible by the deliverance (ἀπολύτρωσις) which is in Christ Jesus. This deliverance is further explained by the relative clause in verse 25. C. K. Barrett's paraphrase sums up our own investigations:

This Christ Jesus God publicly set forth in his bloody sacrificial death as his means of dealing with sin, received through faith. He did this in order to show forth and vindicate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had passed over, without punishment or <sup>1</sup> remission, the sins men had committed in days gone by.

With like emphasis A. M. Hunter speaks for many commentators when he writes, "Christ crucified is announced as God's chosen way of mediating forgiveness to the sinner on the condition of faith while at the same time judging sin."<sup>2</sup> Paul does not say how the Christ-event accomplished both, but he is convinced about the fact of it.

R. Bultmann<sup>3</sup> suggests that in this verse (3.25) Paul is dependent upon (perhaps quoting) a traditional formula. If so, this is further evidence that the church in very early times held the death of Christ to be an essential factor in divine forgiveness.

1. Romans, p. 72.

2. The Epistle to the Romans ("Torch Bible Commentaries"; London: SCM Press, 1955), p. 47. Nygren, Romans, p. 160, writes, "By Christ's atoning death it was made utterly clear that God actually judges sin and yet can forgive without sacrificing his righteousness." Cf. δίκαιον καὶ δίκαιοῦντα (Rom. 3.26).

3. Theology . . ., I, 46.

## Summary

1. Specific references to the forgiveness of sins are not frequent in Paul's writings. We have noted eleven, and four of these are found in quotations from the LXX.
2. Forgiveness is initiated and given by God--Rom. 3.25; 4.7f.; II Cor. 5.19; Eph. 4.32.
3. It is mediated by or given through Jesus Christ (II Cor. 5.18f.), so that forgiveness is said to be "in Christ," a result of being made alive with Christ, etc.--Eph. 1.7f.; 4.32; Col. 1.13f.; 2.13.
4. It is frequently said to be dependent upon or resultant from the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ--Rom. 3.25; II Cor. 5.19 (in context); Col. 2.13 (in context); 3.12f. (in context). There is no complete rationale of this. It is only said that his expiatory death demonstrated the righteousness of the one who forgives and justifies--Rom. 3.25f.
5. It is a present, realized fact of experience--Eph. 1.7f.; 4.32; Col. 1.13f.; 2.13; 3.13.
6. It is received by faith in Jesus Christ--Rom. 3.25; 4.7f. (in context); Col. 2.13 (in context).
7. It is complete and comprehensive: all sins--Col. 2.13; intended for all the Jews--Rom. 11.26b-27; and for all men--II Cor. 5.19.
8. It obligates the recipients to be forgiving toward one another--Eph. 4.32; Col. 3.13.



9. It is frequently listed as being but one of several blessings resulting from the Christ-event (i.e. often ideas of redemption, reconciliation, justification, etc. are added)--Rom. 3.21-26; II Cor. 5.19; Eph. 1.7f.; Col. 1.13f.; 2.9-15.

10. The quotations from the Old Testament imply that the apostle saw this forgiveness to be of a piece with that forgiveness which God bestowed and promised previously to Israel--Rom. 4.7f.; 11.26b-27.

#### References to the Death of Christ as Being "For Our Sins," "For Us," etc.

In the previous section it was noted that the specific references to God's forgiveness of sins were often closely connected with references to the death of Christ. In this section Paul's numerous references to his death will be reviewed. Even though none of them mention "forgiveness," it is probable that this is implied.

#### Passages Connecting the Cross and Sins

There are three passages in which the death of Christ is specifically connected to sins (Gal. 1.4; I Cor. 15.3; Rom. 4.25).

#### <sup>a</sup> Galatians I

In the introduction to the letter to the Galatians the apostle uses wording which reflects the kerygma of the early church. It is probably a piece of pre-Pauline tradition which was handed down to him.

Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, (4) who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father; to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Gal. 1.3-5.

The formula (παρὰ - ) διδόναι plus ὑπέρ (or περὶ )<sup>1</sup> echoing the Isaianic servant is frequent in the New Testament. Here, as elsewhere, its primary reference is to the rejection and death of Jesus.<sup>2</sup> His death "in relation to our sins" undoubtedly refers both to deliverance from their power and from the condemnation which they bring, i.e. freedom from guilt.<sup>3</sup> Thus, forgiveness is, at least, included.

#### I Corinthians XV

The formula in I Cor. 15.3ff. is widely recognized as a piece of the oldest (pre-Pauline) kerygma.<sup>4</sup>

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, (4) that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, (5) and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.

The pertinent part for this study is the first clause: ὅτι Χριστὸς ἀπέθανεν ὑπὲρ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν κατὰ τὰς γραφάς . This clearly states that the death of Christ was in behalf of our sins

1. See Zimmerli and Jeremias, The Servant . . ., pp. 95f., who list seven other occurrences of this combination.
2. So E. D. Burton, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians ("ICC"; New York: Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1920), pp. 11f.; so also F. Buechsel, "δίδωμι," KThWNT, II, 168.
3. So Burton, Galatians, p. 12; Bultmann, Theology . . ., I, 297.
4. See Dodd, The Apostolic Preaching . . ., pp. 7ff.; According to . . ., p. 12; Zimmerli and Jeremias, The Servant . . .

in fulfilment of scripture. The Old Testament scripture referred to is very probably Is. 53.<sup>1</sup> If this is so, the consequent meaning is that the death of Jesus expiates or does away with sins as an obstacle to communion between God and men.<sup>2</sup> Commenting on this passage, Eduard Lohse writes: "Das Ziel seines Leidens und Sterbens aber bestand darin, dass er unsere Sünden uns abnahm und durch das Erleiden der Strafe die Schuld suchte."<sup>3</sup>

#### Romans IV

Romans 4 takes up the matter of Abraham's faith-righteousness. Paul concludes that in like manner righteousness can be attributed to those who believe in the God who raised Jesus from the dead (4.24). He then adds, as descriptive of Jesus:

ὅς παρεδόθη διὰ τὰ παραπτώματα ἡμῶν  
καὶ ἡγέρθη διὰ τὴν δικαίωσιν ἡμῶν

Rom. 4.25

Since παρέδοθη is set in parallel with ἡγέρθη, the thought is that Jesus was given up (by God) unto death ("was put to death,"

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p. 88; Lohse, Maertyrer . . ., p. 113; Bultmann, Theology . . ., I, 82; F. V. Filson, The New Testament Against Its Environment (London: SCM Press, 1950), pp. 39, 55; A. M. Hunter, Introducing . . . Theology, p. 54. The latter dates it at about 35 AD.

1. So Zimmerli and Jeremias, The Servant . . ., pp. 88, 94f.; Wolff, Jesaja 53 . . ., pp. 97f.
2. On the passage Hunter, Introducing . . . Theology, p. 93, writes "This forgiveness is grounded in the deed of the Cross."
3. Maertyrer . . ., p. 114.

RSV).<sup>1</sup> It is probable that διὰ (with the accusative) has its usual meaning "because of." In its first use the reference is probably retrospective.<sup>2</sup> He died on account of "our trespasses" or sins.<sup>3</sup> Nothing is specifically said about the forgiveness of sins, but the whole phrase is again a probable echo of Isaiah 53 where the LXX reads (vs. 12: διὰ τὰς ἁμαρτίας αὐτῶν παρεδόθη .<sup>4</sup> If so, then, the forgiveness of sins is an implied result of that death. Vincent Taylor<sup>5</sup> and others rightly warn that the death for the forgiveness of sins and the resurrection for "our justification" cannot be separated. The whole work of Christ accomplished both (cf. I Cor. 15.17).

Again it is important to note that Rom. 4.25 reads like a Christological formula. R. Bultmann<sup>6</sup> considers it to be another piece of pre-Pauline tradition.

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1. See Zimmerli and Jeremias, The Servant . . ., p. 96. F. Buechsel, "παρεδίδωμι," KThWNT, II, 173, says that εἰς θάνατον is to be understood here. It is often left out by the writers when referring to Jesus. It is simply an abridgment due to common usage.
  2. See Barrett, Romans, p. 100; Taylor, ET, L (1938/39), 298.
  3. Παραπτώματα here has the same basic meaning as ἁμαρτία and is not a milder term. See W. Michaelis, "παραπίπτω, κ.τ.λ.," KThWNT, VI, 173.
  4. Quoted by Zimmerli and Jeremias, The Servant . . ., p. 89, note 397.
  5. Forgiveness . . ., 42f.; so also A. Oepke, "δικαίωμα," KThWNT, II, 69.
  6. Theology . . ., I, 31, 46f., 82; Stauffer, New Testament . . ., pp. 132, 136.



### Similar Passages Connecting the Cross and Sin

There are four other passages (I Cor. 11.24f.; II Cor. 5.21; Rom. 5.6,8; 8.3) which are similar to those just reviewed. These appear to connect the death of Christ to sin (singular) or indicate that it is of benefit to sinners.

### I Corinthians XI

First, there is the Pauline tradition of the Lord's Supper:

. . . (24) and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, 'This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' (25) In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.'

I Cor. 11.24f.

We have already discussed the general critical points and the ideas which are involved in the Eucharistic words. It is obvious that the whole symbolism has reference to the death of Jesus. That the beneficial effect of the bread-word (τοῦτό μου ἐστὶν τὸ σῶμα τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν) includes the forgiveness of sins has already been discussed (p. 236). This is spelled out even more clearly in the Pauline tradition concerning the cup: τοῦτο τὸ ποτήριον ἡ καινὴ διαθήκη ἐστὶν ἐν τῷ ἐμῷ αἵματι. The reference to the "new covenant" is generally agreed to refer (1) to the original covenant God made with Israel at Sinai which was also sealed with blood (Ex. 24.8) and especially (2) to the expectation of the "new covenant" in Jeremiah 31.31 (cf. Rom. 11.27). Since the forgiveness of sins was one of the explicit blessings of this

prophecy (Jer. 31.34), it may be assumed to be a part of the benefit of the death of Jesus which the meal symbolizes.

As most interpreters point out, Paul's conception of the Eucharist emphasizes the idea of the presence of Christ and of communion with him.<sup>1</sup> This corresponds to the evidence elsewhere that in the death of Christ the benefits bestowed exceed the forgiveness of sins.

## II Corinthians V

Secondly, there is the important, but difficult statement in II Cor. 5.21:

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

In addition to the actual sin-bearing life of Jesus, the ancient idea of the scapegoat which was made to bear the sins of Israel (Lev. 16) may be in Paul's mind here. Similarly, Norman H. Snaith<sup>2</sup> suggests that the reference of ἁμαρτία is to the  $\sin$   $\chi$   $\psi$   $\eta$ , an expiatory sacrifice which was, presumably, called "the sin" by the Hebrews. Snaith writes that the reasoning behind the sacrifice is that it became the sin and was got rid of. "It was taken away so that it was no longer between the repentant sinner and God." Therefore, he suggests the interpretation: "Christ, the sinless one, became the means by which our sin is taken away."<sup>3</sup>

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1. See Stauffer, New Testament . . ., p. 163.

2. VT, VII (July, 1957), No. 3, 316f.

3. Ibid., p. 316.

These old priestly ideas may have been in the background, but we cannot be sure since Paul uses ἁμαρτία like this in no other place (cf. Gal. 3.13, *γενόμενος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν κατάρα*).

<sup>1</sup>A. Plummer suggests that though we cannot fathom the meaning here, the "relationship expressed by 'Christ in us and we in Him' is part of the solution." <sup>2</sup>Floyd V. Filson follows this idea when he writes:

Christ by God's will so identified himself with sinful men that in some way, Paul senses, he became involved with their sin; he helped them not by standing aloof and giving them directions as to what they should do, but by entering so completely into their situation that he stood in their place, shared their lot and grappled with the problem for them.

This is one of the few passages in which the apostle suggests how Christ's death dealt with sin.

#### Romans V

A memorable declaration is found in Rom. 5.6,8:

While we were yet helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly . . . (8) But God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.

Here Christ does not die specifically for sins but ὑπὲρ ἀσεβῶν or ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν (ἐκ ἁμαρτωλῶν ὄντων ἡμῶν). Since this is said to show or prove God's own love for us, the implication is that the death effectively dealt with sin for the benefit of the sinner.

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1. A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians (New York: Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1915), p. 187.
  2. "II Corinthians," Inter. Bible, X, 344.

This surely includes forgiveness. The apostle goes on explicitly to affirm that Jesus' death justified (5.9) and reconciled (5.10) sinners to God. These, as will be seen later, include and exceed forgiveness.

### Romans VIII

Finally, in Romans 8.3 it is said:

For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, . . .

περὶ ἁμαρτίας literally means "concerning sin," but it is often used in the LXX for "sin-offering" (Lev. 16.3, etc.). The writer to the Hebrews uses it in this latter sense (Heb. 10.8). C. H. Dodd suggests that it here refers to the "offering for sin" of Is. 53.10 (Heb.  $\square\psi\chi$ ; LXX. περὶ ἁμαρτίας).<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, since Paul employs sacrificial terminology so seldom, some recent commentators have been reluctant to translate it as such here.<sup>2</sup> In any case, Moffatt's translation "to deal with sin" is suitable. The meaning is probably the same as that noted above in Gal. 1.4.

To deal with sin involved not only God's sending (πέμψας) his son in the likeness of sinful flesh (the incarnation) but also his condemnation of it (the atonement). This latter idea is expressed by the clause: κατέκρινεν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν ἐν τῇ σαρκί. That this

1. According to . . . , p. 93.

2. See Knox, Inter. Bible, IX, 508; Barrett, Romans, p. 156.



condemnation includes the death of Jesus seems to follow from Paul's repeated emphasis in the preceding paragraphs on the saving effect of his death (Rom. 6.3-11; 7.1-6) and from the words ἐν τῇ σαρκί<sup>1</sup>.

Here for the first time in this part of the study we meet Paul's use of ἁμαρτία in the singular. We have previously noted his characteristic use of this term as a personified evil power; it may, therefore, be that he is here asserting that by the sending and giving up to death of Christ God has set him (and τοῖς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, 8.1) free from this power. This is a different emphasis from the forgiveness of sins but would include it.

#### Passages Referring Generally to the Benefit of the Cross

In the same line of thought with the previous passages there are a number of others in Pauline literature that refer more generally to the beneficial effect of the death of Christ. It is not said in these that his death was for sins or for sinners, but simply that it was "for us, for all, for you," etc. These may be listed to show how deeply imbedded this thought is in St. Paul's thought.

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1. F. Buechsel, "κατακρίνω, κ.τ. λ.", *KThWNT*, III, 953, writes, "Der Gehorsam des Sohnes bis zum Tod am Kreuz Phil 2,8 darf jedenfalls von diesem κατέκρινεν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν ἐν τῇ σαρκί nicht ausgenommen werden." So also Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, p. 193.

Galatians

2.20 τοῦ ἀγαπήσαντός με καὶ παραδόντος ἑαυτὸν ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ

" . . . who loved me and gave himself for me."

3.13 γενόμενος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν κατάρα

" . . . having become a curse for us--"

I Thessalonians

5.10 [Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ] τοῦ ἀποθανόντος περὶ ἡμῶν

"[Jesus Christ] who died for<sup>1</sup> us . . ."

I Corinthians

1.13 μὴ Παῦλος ἐσταυρώθη περὶ ὑμῶν

"Was Paul crucified for<sup>2</sup> you?" (Expecting a negative answer and implying, on the other hand, that Christ was.)

8.11 ὁ ἀδελφὸς δι' ὃν Χριστὸς ἀπέθανεν

" . . . the brother for whom Christ died."

II Corinthians

5.14 ὅτι εἰς ὑπὲρ πάντων ἀπέθανεν

" . . . that one has died for all;"

5.15 καὶ ὑπὲρ πάντων ἀπέθανεν . . . τῷ ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν ἀποθάνοντι

"And he died for all . . . who for their sake died . . ."

Romans

8.32 [ὁ Θεὸς] . . . ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν πάντων παρέδωκεν αὐτόν

"[God] . . . gave him up for us all, . . ."

1. περί instead of ὑπέρ reading with B, \*, 33.

2. περί instead of ὑπέρ reading with p<sup>46</sup>, B, D\*.

14.15 μὴ τῷ βρώματί σου ἐκείνων ἀπάλλῃς ὑπὲρ οὗ Χριστὸς ἀπέθανεν

"Do not let what you eat cause the ruin of one for whom Christ died."

### Ephesians

5.2 ὁ Χριστὸς ... παρέδωκεν ἑαυτὸν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ...

"Christ . . . gave himself up for us, . . ."

5.25 ὁ Χριστὸς ἡγάπησεν τὴν ἐκκλησίαν καὶ ἑαυτὸν παρέδωκεν ὑπὲρ αὐτῆς ...

" . . . Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, . . ."

All of these passages imply that the death of Jesus Christ was in some way beneficial to the believers. This benefit is usually expressed by the ὑπὲρ (διά or περὶ ) formula. The formula and the idea it expressed probably had its origin in Is. 53 and in the ministry of Jesus, as J. Jeremias points out.<sup>1</sup> The result is that all these passages point to the fact that Paul interpreted Jesus' death as an expiatory sacrifice for sins.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, we may add that the ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν points also to a vicarious<sup>3</sup> or representative death.<sup>4</sup>

1. The Servant . . ., p. 95.

2. So Bultmann, Theology . . ., I, 84f., 295f.

3. Ibid., I, 296.

4. So Dodd, According to . . ., p. 123.

If, then, all these passages refer, at least in part to the forgiveness of sins by way of the death of Christ, why is this not made more explicit? The answer would seem to be, first, that the apostle probably assumed that his readers would make this connection.<sup>1</sup> Secondly, Paul wants to keep a broadly based motivation. If on every occasion of exhortation for Christian behavior Paul had specified some particular gift of the cross (e.g. forgiveness, justification, reconciliation, new life in Christ, etc.) he would have ipso facto limited the meaning of the cross; thus limited, it would have less motivating power. As his exhortations stand all the ideas which cluster about the cross are called in to motivate Christian living.

#### Summary

1. Jesus Christ is said to have died for "all," "you," "the church," "the ungodly," "sinners," etc.
2. His death was considered the death of sin (II Cor. 5.21), or to be on account of sins (Rom. 4.25) or for sins (Gal. 1.4; I Cor. 15.3; Rom. 8.3).
3. This was said to be initiated by God (II Cor. 5.21; Rom. 4.25), or done according to his will or the scriptures (Gal. 1.4; I Cor. 15.3).
4. Though the rationale is not made clear, his death was thought to expiate or annul sin (Rom. 8.3; II Cor. 5.21).

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1. So Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, IV, 1, p. 256.



Since God is the initiator of this, it is equivalent to his forgiveness of sins.

5. Other benefits, besides forgiveness, are said to issue from his death (justification, Rom. 4.25; 5.8f.; 8.3f.; deliverance from the present evil age, Gal. 1.4; the righteousness of God, II Cor. 5.21; reconciliation, Rom. 5.8ff.).

6. This interpretation of the death of Christ is often found in tradition-passages or formulas which point to a widely accepted, pre-Pauline Christology.

#### Relationship of the Forgiveness of Sins to Other Pauline Concepts

How does the understanding of divine forgiveness relate to other prominent themes in Paul's writings? In this section we shall explore its connection with baptism and union with Christ, justification, reconciliation, redemption, and grace.<sup>1</sup>

#### Baptism and Union With Christ

It has been pointed out by many scholars in Pauline studies that faith-union with the risen Christ is one of the most

- 
1. These might be expanded to include salvation (σωζω and substantive) and sanctification (αγιαζω and substantive). However, this investigation will be limited to those concepts which have appeared closely joined to forgiveness in the passages already reviewed. In what follows it will appear that the themes discussed embrace more than "forgiveness." It is not uncritically dogmatic to say that this is even more evident in regard to "salvation" (see A. M. Hunter, Interpreting Paul's Gospel (London: SCM Press, 1954) ) and "sanctification" (see J.K.S. Reid, "Sanctify," ThWBB, pp. 216ff.). It would, therefore, be superfluous to treat them separately.

important themes in Paul's interpretation of the gospel.<sup>1</sup> His close connection of this idea with the early church's rite of baptism makes it possible to treat both at the same time.<sup>2</sup>

The apostle never defines the meaning of the sacrament; rather he assumes that his readers are familiar with it (cf. ἡ ἑνότης, Rom. 6.3). It is something that he shared in common with them; he could even use it to point out the theological basis for ethical exhortation. We may safely assume that his understanding of the rite was essentially the same as that of the early church which we noted in the kerygmatic passages in Acts. Paul had his own emphases due to his background, experience, and thought, but his interpretation appears to be firmly rooted in the common tradition of the early church.

First, we will review the significance which Paul finds in baptism. Afterwards, it may be observed how it is related to the forgiveness of sins. The major points in Paul's

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1. See J. S. Stewart, A Man in Christ (New York: Harper and Bros., 1935), pp. vii, 147; J.A.T. Robinson, The Body (Chicago: Alec R. Allenson, 1952).
  2. On the Pauline conception of baptism see K. Lake, The Earlier Epistles of St. Paul (2d ed.; London: Rivingtons, 1930), pp. 384ff.; Oepke, KThWNT, I, 538ff.; Karl Barth, The Teaching of the Church Regarding Baptism, trans E. A. Payne (London: SCM Press, 1948); Flemington, The New Testament . . ., pp. 52-84; Cullmann, Baptism . . .; Markus Barth, Die Taufe--ein Sacrament? (Zuerich: A. G. Zollikon, 1951), pp. 186-377; Marsh, The Origin . . ., 127-48; Bultmann, Theology . . ., I, 135ff.; 306ff.; J.A.T. Robinson, SJT, VI (1953), 267ff.

concept of the sacrament may be summarized under five heads.

a. Baptism is a sign of the purification or cancellation of sins. For example:

But you were washed (ἀπελούσασθε), you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

I Cor. 6.11

Verses 9-10 indicate that Paul is exhorting his readers to avoid immoral living. He declares that idolaters, adulterers, etc. shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Then he adds that though some of his readers had formerly been such, they had been graciously cleansed. The verb ἀπελούσασθε is probably a permissive middle<sup>1</sup> and, undoubtedly, refers to the baptism<sup>2</sup> which the Corinthian readers had received. Certainly this washing (cf. Eph. 5.26) was thought to bring forgiveness of the sins which the apostle had just previously listed.

This same connection between baptism and the forgiveness of sins appears again in Col. 2.12f. (cf. p. 265 above). It seems certain, therefore, that Paul, in line with the church before him, held baptism to signify the forgiveness of sins.

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1. The idea is "you let yourselves be baptized." See the use of the middle voice with reference to baptism in Acts 22.16; I Cor. 10.2.
  2. So Bultmann, Theology . . ., I, 136; Marsh, The Origin . . ., p. 134.

b. In the second place, Paul considered the rite to be a sealing of the believer by the Lord.

. . . he has put his seal upon us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.

II Cor. 1.22

The reference of the verb *σφραγίζω* here and in Eph. 1.13; 4.30 probably has reference to baptism. By naming the name of Jesus Christ over the baptized person he was stamped as the property of the Lord and placed under his protection. It was but a short step for this to become the rite of initiation into the Christian fellowship.

c. Immediately connected to this "sealing" is the idea that baptism is the sign of the gift of the Holy Spirit.

For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body-- Jews or Greeks, slaves or free--and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

I Cor. 12.13

This same idea--that the Holy Spirit is both the gift and the effective agent in baptism--appears in several other passages: I Cor. 6.11; II Cor. 1.22; Eph. 1.13; 4.30; Acts 19.1-6. Paul would agree with the early preaching in Acts that baptism and the gift of the Spirit were concomitants. There are, however, passages which speak of the gift of the Spirit without any reference to baptism;<sup>1</sup> it would, therefore, not be safe to conclude that the gift of the Holy Spirit is always conditioned by the external rite of baptism.

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1. See I Cor. 2.12; II Cor. 5.5; Gal. 3.5; 4.6.



d. Baptism is also a sign of the recipient's union with Christ in his death and resurrection. The main passage in which this idea is presented is Rom. 6.3-5:

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? (4) We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. (5) For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

James S. Stewart<sup>1</sup> points out that Paul joins to the idea of death with Christ that of burial in order to put the reality of the death to sin beyond dispute. "To the convert, going down into the water, the moment of immersion was like a burying of the old self which in union with Christ he had renounced."<sup>2</sup>

Carrying on the image, the apostle affirms that the resurrection with him brings newness of life. This same vivid figure *συνθάπτω* and *συνεγείρω* --is found again in Col. 2.12. From Paul's question in Rom. 6.3 (*ὃ ὁμοῦσιν*) it is apparent that he does not consider himself the originator of the idea. Rather he assumes that it is common knowledge and on the basis of it argues for ethical living.

e. Baptism in Paul's writings also signifies the recipient's incorporation into the body of Christ. This follows

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1. A Man in . . ., p. 191. For further exposition of the following idea see Dietrich Bonhoeffer, The Cost of Discipleship, trans. R. H. Fuller (London: SCM Press, 1948), p. 176.

2. Stewart, A Man in . . ., p. 191.

directly from the previous idea of the believer's participation in his death, burial and resurrection.

For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body--  
I Cor. 12.13a

For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

Gal. 3.27

<sup>1</sup>  
K. Lake insists that Paul and the early church thought of this incorporation as a mystery working ex opere operato. This is not tenable in the light of the pervading emphasis on faith in Paul's writing, but Lake is probably right in suggesting that the rite is more than symbolical. The result of the incorporation is that the Christian existence can be called "in Christ" (Gal. 3.28). To belong to the Christian Church is to be "in Christ" or "in the Lord" (Rom. 16.7,11; I Cor. 1.30), and Christian congregations may be said to be "in Christ" (Gal. 1.22; I Thess. 2.14). These citations could be extended at great length. Their foundation is Paul's conception of the church as the "body of Christ" and Christians as members of that body. This metaphor (yet more than a metaphor--this assumed state being) can reasonably be held to be the unifying theme of Paul's soteriological and ecclesiological thoughts.<sup>2</sup>

It is quite apparent that this connection of the sacrament of baptism with faith-union with the risen Lord takes one into the midst of Paul's eschatological message:

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1. Lake, The Earlier . . ., p. 385.

2. See Robinson, The Body.

Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come.

II Cor. 5.17

Two other matters in regard to Paul's understanding of baptism must be briefly mentioned before we relate the whole to the forgiveness of sins. First, we may note with a number of recent writers that Paul's conception of this sacrament has its foundations in the "baptism" of Jesus Christ which began in the Jordan<sup>a</sup> and culminated in his death and resurrection (Mk. 10.38f.; Lk. 12.49f.).<sup>1</sup> Indeed, so close is the rite of baptism connected to this saving occurrence that when Paul refers to the past event of baptism which he shared with his readers,<sup>2</sup> his specific historical reference is sometimes ambiguous. He may be referring to the water-rite which they had each received or to Good Friday and Easter, or to both.<sup>3</sup> This connection of ideas may be illustrated in a familiar passage:

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word . . . .

Eph. 5.25f.

F. W. Beare comments:

In this language the thought of a corporate baptism of the church by Christ himself is superimposed, in a kind of 'double exposure,' on the imagery of individual baptism. The church in her totality passed with Christ

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1. See Cullmann, Baptism . . .; this is the thesis of his book. See also Robinson, SJT, VI (1953), 276ff.; G.W.H. Lampe, "Baptism in the New Testament," SJT, V (1952), 174; Oepke, KThWNT, I, 538; Stauffer, New Testament . . ., p. 161.
  2. Note the use of the first person plural of βαπτίζω in Rom. 6.4; I Cor. 12.13.
  3. Robinson, SJT, VI (1953), 267ff., points this out in regard to Col. 2.11-15; Eph. 5.25-27; I Cor. 1.13; 6.11; 10.1f.

through the baptism of death which he endured on her behalf; and the Christian sacrament in its repeated administration is the effectual sign of the believer's incorporation in the community so baptized.<sup>1</sup>

In the second place, the baptism to which Paul refers is apparently never conditioned; only a receiving faith is mentioned (cf. Col. 2.12). What was the content of this faith? We may gather from possible baptismal formulas in Paul<sup>2</sup> and from his general teaching on faith<sup>3</sup> that it would be that "Jesus Christ is Lord."

How is Paul's conception of baptism related to the forgiveness of sins? In the light of the foregoing review forgiveness is seen to be an integral part of the meaning of the rite. However, the significance of baptism exceeds the one idea of forgiveness. His understanding of baptism corresponds to his conception of sin. He thinks of sin both as particular offenses against God and as a personified power that enslaves and kills. In baptism, therefore, the believer is not only forgiven, but with Christ he dies to this evil power and is released from its bondage, being given a new life in Christ. In, thus, signifying the victory over the evil power, it is a more thorough negative than forgiveness. And in the gift of new life with God in Christ it includes positive value for which forgiveness merely opens the way.

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1. Inter. Bible, X, p. 723.

2. See Rom. 10.9; I Cor. 12.3; Phil. 2.11. These are so designated by Stewart, A Man in . . ., p. 295; Bultmann, Theology . . ., I, 312.

3. See Scott, Christianity . . ., pp. 98-133.



### Justification

Since the Reformation there have been many writers who have held that the doctrine of justification was the central doctrine in Pauline theology. However, we have been reminded by James S. Stewart,<sup>1</sup> W. D. Davies,<sup>2</sup> A. M. Hunter,<sup>3</sup> J.A.T. Robinson,<sup>4</sup> and others that this is not the case. Rather justification is an important idea which assists in his presentation of the larger benefits of being saved by Christ and being in union with him. What is the relationship of justification to forgiveness? To answer this necessitates a look at the idea of justification. There has been a large amount of investigation of this concept.<sup>5</sup> We need only summarize it briefly.

Paul employs a family of terms to express the idea:

δικαιοσύνη (occurs 55 times), δικαίω (25), δίκαιος (14), δικαίωμα (5), δικαίωμας (2). This enumeration shows immediately that the apostle used these words far more frequently than ἁγιάζειν, ἁγιασμός, and ἡγίζομαι.

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1. A Man in . . ., pp. vii, 147.
  2. Paul . . ., pp. 221ff.
  3. Interpreting Paul's . . ., pp. 21f.
  4. The Body. The thesis of the work implies that justification is subsidiary to the inclusive idea of the believer's incorporation into the body of Christ.
  5. All the Bible and theological dictionaries have articles on it. Some of the commentaries have special discussions on the idea. See, especially, Quell and Schrenk, Righteousness.

"Righteousness" in the Old Testament (LXX.  $\delta\iota\kappaαιοσύνη$ ; Heb.  $\righteousness$  and cognates) had its roots in God and his character--not in the natural virtue of men or norms of society, as in Greek usage.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, it was not thought to be a static attribute but a positive activity of God. The word belongs to the terminology of relationship. "God's righteousness is manifested first in that he rules according to the covenant in fellowship with his people . . . it includes both a forensic and a soteriological element."<sup>2</sup> God's righteousness is frequently thought of as bringing help and salvation to his people.<sup>3</sup> Thus, two Old Testament ideas--God's demand of obedience on the part of men and God's faithfulness to save--are the assumptions behind Paul's doctrine.<sup>4</sup>

C. H. Dodd has pointed out that this saving idea gives the verb  $\delta\iota\kappaαίω$  a meaning which is strange to non-biblical Greek.<sup>5</sup> In Classical Greek it means "to treat justly" or "to do justice to" a person. Consequently,  $\delta\iota\kappaαίω\tau\acute{o}\nu \alpha\delta\iota\kappa\acute{o}\nu$  would mean "to condemn or punish the unjust."<sup>6</sup>

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1. So Quell and Schrenk, Righteousness, pp. 26ff.

2. Ibid., pp. 29f.

3. So Ibid., p. 30. So also N. H. Snaith, "Righteous," ThWBB, p. 203. See Is. 46.13; 45.21; 51.5; Ps. 24.5.

4. See Bultmann, Theology . . ., I, 270.

5. The Bible . . ., p. 52.

6. Ibid.

In contrast to this and in direct line with the usage of the LXX is the Pauline concept. We may note some of its principle features.<sup>1</sup> (1) It is a gift of God which he has given on his own initiative--Rom. 3.24; 4.5; 8.33; Gal. 3.8. (2) It is based upon a historical, forgiving act of expiation--the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ--Rom. 3.21-26; 5.9; cf. 4.25; 5.16, 18.<sup>2</sup> (3) Faith on the part of men is nearly always mentioned as a basis of justification, and this faith is inseparable from the saving event--Rom. 3.28, 30; 4.5; 5.1. Although it is not always indicated, Rom. 3.26 and Gal. 2.16 make it clear that this faith refers to a personal faith-relationship with Christ. (4) When the believer is "justified," there is included both the forensic and saving ideas. It means that he has been acquitted and absolved of all his sins. Moreover, he is pronounced righteous and given a new character, a new standing in the sight of God.<sup>3</sup> (5) Although not denying the final judgment, this gift is effective in the present. It is an eschatological act brought into the present (Rom. 3.21).<sup>4</sup>

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1. For what follows I am indebted to Quell and Schrenk, Righteousness, pp. 43ff., 61ff.; and to Taylor, Forgiveness . . ., pp. 36ff.
  2. So also Bultmann, Theology . . ., I, 278.
  3. Cf. Rom. 3.24-26; 5.1, 9, 17; 8.30; 9.30; I Cor. 6.11; Phil. 3.9. So Quell and Schrenk, Righteousness, p. 44; Bultmann, Theology . . ., I, 276f.
  4. So Quell and Schrenk, Righteousness, pp. 49ff.; Taylor, Forgiveness . . ., pp. 36f.; Bultmann, Theology . . ., I, 274, 278f.

It is not to be delayed until the final judgment as in Rabbinic Judaism but has meaning for men in the present time.

From this outline of the concept one may readily see that there are some features of justification that are parallel to the idea of forgiveness. Indeed, the two terms have often been taken to be synonymous. This equation, however, entails a serious loss, as Vincent Taylor points out,<sup>1</sup> since by it the differentia of justification--the declaration or imputation of righteousness--is lost. "We can no longer doubt," writes Taylor, "that St. Paul definitely preferred to speak of 'being justified' rather than 'being forgiven.' To him justification was the richer and more positive conception."<sup>2</sup>

### Reconciliation

Another group of terms which Paul uses frequently has an essential meaning close to that of the forgiveness of sins. These terms refer to the idea of reconciliation. The apostle uses the verb καταλλάσσειν six times,<sup>3</sup> the verb ἀποκαταλλάσσειν three times,<sup>4</sup> and the noun καταλλαγή four times.<sup>5</sup>

1. Forgiveness . . ., pp. 62ff.
2. Ibid., pp. 62f. So F. Schleiermacher, The Christian Faith, trans. and ed. H. P. Mackintosh and Jas. S. Stewart (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1928), pp. 496ff. Quell and Schrenk, Righteousness, p. 46; Bultmann, Theology . . ., I, 287. Scott, Christianity . . ., pp. 74f., on the other hand, holds that forgiveness includes both justification and reconciliation.
3. Rom. 5.10 (twice); I Cor. 7.11 (reconciliation of husband and wife); II Cor. 5.18, 19, 20.
4. Eph. 2.16; Col. 1.20, 22.
5. Rom. 5.11; 11.15; II Cor. 5.18f.



There have been many studies of these terms and of the passages in which they occur.<sup>1</sup> It is impossible to go into the whole matter here. We need only list the major points in Paul's use of the idea. (1) By reconciliation he means the restoration of men from estrangement to fellowship with God--Rom. 5.10; Eph. 2.16; Col. 1.21f. (2) The reconciliation is that of men to God, not that of God to men--II Cor. 5.19 (where θεός is the subject and κόσμον the object of reconciliation).<sup>2</sup> (3) This is an act already accomplished by God. It is not so much a process as a deed to be proclaimed--Rom. 5.10f.; Col. 1.21f.; cf. II Cor. 5.19). (4) The act of reconciliation is wrought through Christ and the power of his sacrificial death--Rom. 5.10; Col. 1.20, 22.<sup>3</sup> (5) Men contribute nothing except their active consent and willingness to be reconciled--Rom. 5.11 (δεῖ οὖν νῦν τὴν καταλλαγὴν ἔλαβμεν). (6) The state of reconciliation is variously described by Paul as peace with God, freedom, sonship, fellowship and sanctification.<sup>4</sup> However, it is not always possible to tell whether these belong to the essential content of

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1. For a list of the older works see the bibliography given by Frederic Platt, "Reconciliation," HDAC, II, 302. See also Friedrich Buechsel, "καταλλάσσω; K.T. λ. ; . . ." KThWNT, I, 254ff.; Taylor, Forgiveness . . . , pp. 70-108; Bultmann, Theology . . . , I, 285ff.
  2. So Buechsel, KThWNT, I, 255; Bultmann, Theology . . . , I, 287. But see Platt, HDAC, II, 300ff. and others cited there who hold that God also was reconciled.
  3. See Buechsel, KThWNT, I, 255.
  4. See Taylor, Forgiveness . . . , pp. 85-99; F. J. Taylor, "Reconcile," ThWBB, p. 185.

reconciliation or are aspects of the life of the reconciled.

From this brief outline one can see that reconciliation also partially parallels the idea of the forgiveness of sins. Yet one cannot but conclude that reconciliation is a more inclusive idea. F. Buechsel concludes: "Sie umfasst freilich als Erweckung der Liebe noch mehr als nur die Beseitigung der Schuld in der Vergebung."<sup>1</sup> To define reconciliation as simply the forgiveness of sins is to deprive it of its positive suggestion of full communion or fellowship with God through Jesus Christ.

#### Redemption

It has already been observed that the term ἀπολύτρωσις appears twice in parallel with ἄφεσις (Eph. 1.7; Col. 1.14) and in close connection with ἱλαστήριον (Rom. 3.24f.). In addition to these it occurs four other times in Pauline writings.<sup>2</sup> Because of its apparently close relationship to forgiveness, it is necessary to review its meaning. There have been many studies of the concept.<sup>3</sup>

1. KThWNT, I, 258. In regard to ἀποκαταλλάσσω he again holds that it cannot be limited to the removal of the guilt relationship between man and God, for it clearly embraces making peace (Col. 1.20; Eph. 2.15) and a new creation (Eph. 2.15), p. 259.
2. Rom. 8.23; I Cor. 1.30; Eph. 1.14; 4.30.
3. See Stamm, Erlösen und Vergeben . . .; F. Buechsel, "ἀπολύτρωσις," KThWNT, IV, 354ff.; W. Adams Brown, "Redemption," HDB, IV, 210f.; James Orr, "Redemption," HCG, II, 475-84; F. J. Taylor, "Redeem," ThWBB, pp. 185ff. See the brief bibliography of recent works in Bauer, "ἀπολύτρωσις," A Greek-English Lexicon . . ., p. 95.

The original meaning is a "buying back" (as of a slave or captive), a "making free" (by payment of a λύτρον). The word only appears once in the LXX (Dan. 4.32) where it refers simply to the "deliverance" from disease. However, the family of words which have to do with redemption (especially λυτροῦν) has a rich use in the LXX. We may summarize it briefly.

(1) The theme of redemption is embodied in every part of the literature of the Old Testament. (2) The emphasis is laid upon the divine initiative in redeeming or ransoming men. (3) The deliverance is usually from physical or material peril, but these usually have a spiritual reference (cf. especially the "redemption" from Egypt, Deut. 7.8 and from Babylon, Is. 43.1; 44.6; passim). As regards the payment of a λύτρον, F. J. Taylor, rightly observes that "while the idea of a price paid is an essential feature of the term, the emphasis is more frequently laid upon the result, the deliverance or release which is secured by the payment."<sup>1</sup>

When the specific use of ἀπολύτρωσις in the New Testament is examined it is found that the idea of the payment of a ransom is almost but not entirely absent.<sup>2</sup> Arguing strongly that it is absent, F. Buechsel writes:

Die urspruengliche 'etymologisch begruendete' Bedeutung vom ἀπολύτρωσις ist also im biblischen Sprachgebrauch

1. ThWBB, p. 186.

2. So Dodd, Romans, pp. 53f. This is partially substantiated by Paul's failure to use such terms as ἀπολυτρόω and λύτρον.

'verwischt' . . . Die richtige deutsche Übersetzung von ἀπολύτρωσις ist deshalb nur Erloesung oder Befreiung, nicht Loskaufung, ausnahmsweise auch Freilassung Hb 11,35 und Erledigung Hb 9,15."<sup>1</sup>

However, those who insist that the idea of a ransom payment is not absent from Paul's mind have considerable reason on their side.<sup>2</sup> His use of ἀγοράζω and ἐξαγορίζω are, of course, not to be taken literally,<sup>3</sup> but we cannot escape the conclusion that Paul employed these commercial terms to emphasize the cost of man's deliverance as well as the fact of it (cf. Jesus' use of λύτρον , Mk. 10.45).

Having said that "redemption" is a costly deliverance, we may note further that in the New Testament it is considered a present possession and reality for believers.

. . . in whom we have (ἔχομεν) redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Col. 1.14

It also has a future reference:

and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

Rom. 8.23 (cf.  
Eph. 1.14; 4.30)

1. KThWNT, IV, 358. (Italics his.)
2. See Sanday and Headlam, Romans, p. 86; Barrett, Romans, p.76.
3. ἀγοράζω stresses not the payment but the fact that the Christian is a possession of Christ (I Cor. 6.20; 7.23); see F. Buechsel, "ἀγοράζω, κ.τ.λ.," KThWNT, I, 126. ἐξαγορίζω likewise, does not stress the payment but the "deliverance" from the slavery of the law (Gal. 3.13; 4.5); see Buechsel, KThWNT, I, 126f.



These are not inconsistent but in line with the same dual perspective which informs other Pauline conceptions. The present deliverance is an eschatological one; it is final and definite now, yet finds its completion at the End.

As in the Old Testament, so in the New, God is the initiator of redemption (I Cor. 1.30). Moreover, just as the two great events in Israelite history--the exodus from Egypt and Babylon--were termed God's redemption, so also redemption in the New Testament refers to the historic event of Jesus Christ.

Die ἀπολύτρωσις ist streng gebunden an die Person Jesu  
(Rom. 3.24f.; I Cor. 1.30; Eph. 1.7; Col. 1.14).<sup>1</sup>

Erloesung gibt es nur im Umkreis des Glaubens an Jesus; sie ist Auswirkung seiner Liebe und Selbsthingabe an uns Gal 2.20.<sup>2</sup>

After having recalled all these things about redemption in the New Testament, its exact significance has still not been shown. It is correct to say that the word simply refers to the general idea of costly deliverance and is not as concrete nor as full of content as δικαιοσύνη or καταλλαγή.<sup>3</sup> It receives its content from its context. Therefore, in Col. 1.14 and Eph. 1.7, where it is used in parallel with τὴν ἁφροσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν (παρὰ πτωμάτων), it refers to the deliverance

1. Buechsel, KThWNT, IV, 356.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., p. 359.

found in the "forgiveness of sins."<sup>1</sup> Since, as we have noted, the idea of the price paid may not be said to be entirely lost from the term we may conclude that it gives further evidence of the costliness of divine forgiveness.

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace . . . .

Eph. 1.7

### Grace

Paul's occasional use of the verb *χαρίζομαι* with the sense of forgiveness has already been observed. Far more frequent is his use of the noun *χάρις* (approx. 80 occurrences). In the LXX this term is used almost exclusively for *ἔλεος* and most frequently in the expression "to find favor (*εὐρεῖν χάριν*) in" the sight of God or another person. Paul's use of *χάρις*, however, as many scholars have noticed, shows a much closer relationship to *ἔλεος* (LXX: *ἐλεος*) than to *ἔλεος*.<sup>2</sup> Moulton and Milligan<sup>3</sup> have shown from the papyri how readily *χάρις* lent itself to the deeper Christian meaning in line with *ἔλεος*, and the theological ideas it conveys parallel those of *ἔλεος* in several ways. As with *ἔλεος* so with *χάρις*, God is the initiator and the source.<sup>4</sup> Just as the central meaning of *ἔλεος* is

1. *Ibid.*, p. 357.

2. So Dodd, *The Bible . . .*, p. 60f.; N. H. Snaith, "Grace," *ThWBB*, pp. 100f.; J. A. Montgomery, "Hesed and Charis," *HTR*, 32 (1939), 97-102; A. W. Argyle, "Grace and Covenant," *ET*, 60 (Oct. 1948), pp. 26f.

3. *VGT*, pp. 684f.

4. See Rom. 3.24; 15.15; I Cor. 1.4; II Cor. 1.2, 12; Gal. 1.3; 2.21; Eph. 1.7f.; 2.5-8; 3.2, 7; II Thess. 1.12; 2.16.

governed by the event of Yahweh's covenant<sup>1</sup> so ~~Xp'is~~ has primary reference to an event--the coming, death and resurrection of Christ.<sup>2</sup> God's grace is mediated to men through that event.<sup>3</sup>

I give thanks to God always for you because of the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus . . . .  
I Cor. 1.4

It is especially made manifest in Christ's incarnation and sacrificial death:

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich.  
II Cor. 8.9<sup>4</sup>

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace which he lavished upon us.  
Eph. 1.7f.<sup>5</sup>

An essential characteristic of grace (also of  $\tau\acute{o}\gamma\eta$ ) is its freeness; it is often explicitly pointed out that it is a gift--unearned and undeserved.

But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.  
Rom. 11.6

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1. See R. Bultmann, " $\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$ ," KThWNT, II, 476f.
  2. So Bultmann, Theology . . . , I, 289. See Rom. 1.4f.; 3.24; II Cor. 8.9; Gal. 1.3f.
  3. See Rom. 1.5; 3.24; 5.15; I Cor. 1.4; II Cor. 1.2; 8.9; 12.9; Gal. 1.3; Eph. 1.7f; 2.5-8; II Thess. 1.12.
  4. Cf. Phil. 2.5ff.
  5. See also Rom. 3.24f.; 5.15; Gal. 1.3.

Closely allied with this is the thought that God's grace through Christ overcomes the power of sin.

Law came in, to increase the trespass; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Rom. 5.20f.

It accomplishes this by its total effect. It includes the forgiveness of trespasses (Eph. 1.7), the declaration of righteousness to sinners (Rom. 3.24; 5.15f.; Gal. 2.21), and peace with God (Rom. 5.1f). In other passages grace appears as a principle or power--the indwelling operation of God--which commissions, reigns, saves and bestows diversified gifts to believers.<sup>1</sup>

In chapters 5 and 6 of Romans *χάρις* (and *χάρισμα*) occurs frequently and appears to be the generic term for the whole message--i.e. that God has shown his love to men in the fact that while they were still sinners Christ died for them. Because of that deed, grace abounds for sinners and enables them to die to sin, to be set free from slavery to it.

Beyond these two important chapters the term "grace" continues to be as widely inclusive a term as any in the Pauline vocabulary. Although it sometimes refers to specific gifts among men,<sup>2</sup> or to men's thanks in response to God's grace,<sup>3</sup>

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1. See Rom. 5.21; 12.3; 15.15; I Cor. 3.10; 15.10; II Cor. 8.1; Gal. 1.15; Eph. 2.5; 3.7f. 4.7.

2. E.g., I Cor. 16.3; II Cor. 8.6f.; Eph. 4.29.

3. E.g., Rom. 6.17; 7.25; etc.



most of its occurrences refer to the aggregate of the blessings which God bestows in Jesus Christ. This meaning may be observed in numerous instance within the body of the epistles<sup>1</sup> and may also be found in the salutations and final greetings of each of his letters.<sup>2</sup> E.g.,

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Phil. 1.2

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

Phil. 4.23

N. H. Snaith is justified in summarizing: "The main and characteristic New Testament use of the word grace . . . is of God's redemptive love to save sinners and maintain them in proper relationship with him."<sup>3</sup> As such *χάρις* is the verbal symbol for the great theme of Pauline theology. In its relation to forgiveness James Moffatt is doubtless correct: "Grace is more than pardon, it is power, the divine power which redeems life and also uses it, rendering a man efficient for service."<sup>4</sup> Though Paul's idea of grace exceeds the idea of forgiveness of sins, it does serve to underline one of the important elements

1. E.g., Rom. 5.17; 20f.; 6.1; I Cor. 1.4; II Cor. 4.15; 6.1; 8.9; 9.8; Eph. 1.6,7; 2.5-8; 3.2; Phil. 1.7; Col. 1.6; II Thess. 1.12; 2.16. See J. C. Lambert, "Grace," HDCG, I 688.
2. On the use of the term *χάρις* at the opening and close of the letters see Moffatt, Grace . . ., pp. 136-55. He writes, "When Paul . . . prays for 'grace and peace from God and from Jesus Christ' he is concentrating in a single phrase the essence of the primitive gospel" (p. 146).
3. ThWBB, p. 100.
4. Grace . . ., p. 227.

in his concept of forgiveness--God forgives sin without insisting first on any guarantees of better conduct. If it was earned or deserved in any way it would no longer be grace but  
 ὀφείλημα (Rom. 4.4).

Paul's Concept of Forgiveness Shown  
in Other Kinds of Passages

Finally, there are hints at Paul's concept of God's forgiveness in some of the feelings he expressed in various situations. A number of passages might be mentioned, but the following selections are obvious and typical.

First to be mentioned is his attitude toward the Jews as a whole (Rom. 9-11). Though he was a convert from Judaism and had suffered much at the hands of the Jews, he was forgiving and compassionate toward them.

For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen by race.

Rom. 9.3

This spirit does not suggest the feelings of one who had finally extricated himself from a group whose pressures he had long striven against. Rather such freedom from bitterness, such forgiving devotion suggest one who, himself, had been surprised by grace, i.e. forgiveness, love, and a commission to one unworthy. His own boasting had been excluded; God took the initiative in salvation. Forgiveness was free.

In another passage (I Cor. 9.1-18) Paul argues vigorously that he and Barnabas, as itinerant evangelists, have a right to

their board and keep from the church they serve. Nevertheless, he has refrained from making use of this right (1) to avoid putting obstacles in the way of the gospel (9.12a) and (2) to make the gospel "free of charge" (9.18b). This policy of supporting himself was probably inconvenient on numerous occasions. It points out how deeply ingrained it was in the apostle that forgiveness (and salvation, generally) was graciously bestowed to him. Consequently, he felt under obligation (9.16f.) to give it to others just as freely as it had been given to him.

In two passages having to do with discipline within the church the apostle demonstrates a forgiving spirit (II Cor. 2. 5-11; Gal. 6.1). These indicate that he recognized that his forgiving others ἐν προσώπῳ Χριστοῦ (II Cor. 2.10) was but a reflection of God's previous forgiveness to him and to all in Christ.

Finally a passage in Philemon is notable. Paul's deep devotion to Onesimus, Philemon's runaway slave, is made clear in the letter. Indeed, to send him back to his owner was as painful to Paul as sending his own heart (vs. 12). The apostle would like for him to have his freedom and to stay and continue to help him during his imprisonment. However, it is evident that both Paul and Onesimus are agreed that the latter should return to his former owner. Further, it is clear that Paul thinks that Philemon ought to free Onesimus. Paul's reasoning may well have been along the lines of the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant

(Matt. 18.23-35) for he reminds Philemon of his (Philemon's) great indebtedness (vs. 19). Theo Preiss is doubtless correct when he writes: "It is clear that this curious theological accountability stems directly from that remission of all their sins which is the source of life to the members of the Church."<sup>1</sup>

### Conclusions

Although infrequently, Paul does explicitly mention the forgiveness of sins. More often it is implied in other concepts which he uses and in his understanding of the death of Christ. Forgiveness was, for him, (1) a gift of God, (2) in accordance with the scriptures, (3) mediated specifically through Jesus Christ. It is (4) dependent or resultant upon his death and resurrection and in no way upon the desert or even repentance of men. This death served to expiate or deal effectively with sin, to vindicate the righteousness of God and to show God's love for sinners. In this interpretation of Christ's death Paul seems to be drawing on common tradition in the early church. Further, forgiveness (5) was a present reality of experience which (6) was to be received by faith-union with the risen Christ and (7) was available for all men. It may be (8) defined as God's thoroughgoing annulment of sins in his sight; more specifically it is God's cancellation of the guilt contracted by sins--his doing away with the barrier which men's

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1. Life in Christ, trans. Harold Knight (Napierville, Ill.: Alec. R. Allenson, 1954), p. 38.



offenses cause between themselves and him. Finally, divine forgiveness (9) obligated the believers to forgive one another.

Why is it that Paul so seldom mentions specifically the forgiveness of sins? In answer it must, first, be recalled that he more frequently thinks of sin as a principle or demonic power that can gain power over men than as a particular offense against God. In the second place, it must be remembered that in his terminology for salvation the apostle employs larger, more positive terms that include forgiveness, yet surpass it in content. God's gifts in the Christ-event are described in terms of justification, reconciliation, grace, salvation, sanctification, new life with the risen Christ and their correlative ideas. Why, then, does Paul so seldom mention forgiveness? The answer seems to lie in two possible directions. (1) For Paul to explain the grace of God in Christ in terms of the concept of the forgiveness of sins was inadequate to the point of being misleading. Therefore, he avoided the phrase. R. Bultmann writes:

His avoidance of the term "forgiveness of sins" (which is connected with his avoidance of the term "repentance," . . . ) is evidently due to the fact that "forgiveness of sin" is insofar ambiguous as it seems to declare only release from the guilt contracted by "former sins" whereas the important thing for Paul is release from sinning, release from the power of sin . . . .<sup>1</sup>

(b) Another and more probable answer is that the term "forgiveness" is inadequate in the way that the corner of a painting is inadequate to convey an impression of the whole of the painting. As in the kerygma of the early church so with the apostle, the

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1. Theology . . . , I, 287.

eschatological age had penetrated into history. The coming of the Holy Spirit was the guarantee and substantial proof. As in the hope of Jer. 31.31ff. and elsewhere, forgiveness was an essential part of the expected age (now arrived) but not the whole. Therefore, Paul employs the concept of forgiveness but only as a part of the greater picture.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Another possible explanation for the infrequency of the terms for forgiveness is that, like "repentance," forgiveness is a subject of special concern for the missionary's first contact with pagans. Since the letters of Paul are addressed to people who are already Christians, these terms are replaced by those which express ideas more appropriate to their situation.

## CHAPTER VI

### TESTIMONY CONCERNING DIVINE FORGIVENESS IN HEBREWS

#### Introduction

One of the most fascinating letters within the New Testament is the Epistle to the Hebrews. Since the days of Origen in the third century A. D. (and, according to him, even before) there have been doubts about its authorship. Although Paul's name was associated with it at the time, Origen and other scholars to this day have seen in its style and content marked differences from the Pauline writings. Many attempts have been made to discern the author's identity. The suggestion of Apollos (cf. Acts 18.24) is especially attractive, since the substance of the epistle seems to require an author with both a Jewish and an Alexandrian background. However, no certainty can be attained at present.

The letter is to be dated prior to 90 A. D., since Clement of Rome was familiar with it, and probably prior to the destruction of the Temple and its cultus in 70 A. D.

Whatever view is taken of the purpose of this letter, its main interest clearly lies in soteriology and its basic outline is simple. The theme is stated at the beginning. God's revelation in his Son is final and perfect (1.1-2a). Then follows

a closely reasoned argument (1.2b-10.18)<sup>1</sup>. Jesus Christ is this final revelation of God because in his person he is God's Son (1.2b-4.13) and in his work he is the great High Priest whose sacrifice effected forgiveness once for all (4.14-10.18). After the argument comes the application and conclusion (10.19-13.25). In view of the perfection of God's revelation in Christ and his opening up a new access to the presence of God, the readers are exhorted to go forth to Jesus "outside the camp" and hold fast by faith to him. Failure to do so means a fearful judgment.

As this outline shows, more than half of the main argument of the letter concerns the work of Christ as the great, sympathetic high priest (4.14-10.18). The author is at particular pains to prove that the high priesthood of Christ was far superior to that of the Levitical high priest (Chap. 7), that the earthly tabernacle and its Holy of Holies was but a copy and shadow of the reality in heaven in which Christ ministered (8.1-5; 9.11); that the new covenant which he mediated was superior to the old (8.6-13) and that the sacrifice which he offered was far superior, indeed, final and complete (9.1-10.18).

In all this it is obvious what holds particular interest for the author. It is the high priest's primary duty of making expiation for the sins of the people by the appointed sacrifices (cf. 2.17; 5.1,3). The author fixes his attention on the high priest's part in effecting divine forgiveness of sins. By means of contrasts with the old priesthood, he brings out the final and perfect forgiveness which the priesthood of Christ assures.

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1. The argument is punctuated with admonitory passages: 2.1-4; 3.7-4.13; 5.11-6.20.



Keeping the fundamental course of the argument in mind, it is now possible to look at some of the important passages as they appear.

### Hebrews 1.3

He reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature, upholding the universe by his word of power. When he had made purification for sins (*καθαρισμὸν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ποιήσας*), he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high . . . .

The idea of forgiveness is here expressed by a term of cleansing which had a rich cultic use in the LXX.<sup>1</sup> The author intends the term to have here solely the ethical-religious meaning, i.e. forgiveness, as its verb has in 9.14.<sup>2</sup> His use of cultic terminology is significant. It serves to introduce the whole subsequent contrast between the old sacrificial system and the high priestly work of Jesus.

With its exceedingly high Christology, the passage indicates that God is the ultimate author of the forgiveness of sins. It is mediated eschatologically (*ἐπ' ἐσχάτου τῶν ἡμερῶν τούτων*) through the ministry and death<sup>3</sup> of his

1. See F. Hauck, "*καθαρός*, κ.τ.λ.", *KThWNT*, III, 433. Note also that this phrase is almost a quotation of Job's cry for forgiveness in 7.21 (LXX: *ὅτι τί οὐκ ἐποίησα καθαρισμὸν τῆς ἁμαρτίας μου*).
2. So Hauck, *KThWNT*, III, 429, 433; James Moffatt, *A Critical And Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* ("ICC"; New York: Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1924), pp. 8, 125.
3. That the death of Jesus is in mind here may be inferred from the thrust of the whole argument in 9.15-10.18. See Otto Michel, *Der Brief an die Hebräer* ("Meyer's Kommentar zum Neuen Testament"; 8th ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1949), p. 42; Moffatt, *Hebrews*, p. 8.

Son. As scholars generally point out, the theme of the whole epistle is in these verses.

Hebrews 2.17

Therefore he had to be made like his brethren in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make expiation for the sins of the people (εἰς τὸ ἁλοκεῖναι τὰς ἁμαρτίας τοῦ λαοῦ ).

Here another priestly term is used to express the idea of forgiveness.<sup>1</sup> The section in which this verse lies, 2.5-18, gives another preview of the whole course of the author's letter. For a little while Jesus was made lower than the angels. As the pioneer of salvation, God made him perfect by his suffering. He shared the same flesh and blood with the rest of the sons of Abraham and was made like his brethren in every respect so that ( ἵνα ) he might become a sympathetic and faithful high priest in the service of God. The author, like Paul before him, says that it was by the grace of God that Jesus tasted death for everyone ( ὑπὲρ πάντων , 2.9). By his death he expiates sins--brings forgiveness. God is the initiator, a priestly Christ is the mediator, and the whole world of men was the recipient.<sup>2</sup>

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1. See p.270 above. It appears frequently in the LXX for  $\pi\acute{\iota}\nu\epsilon\iota$  (pi'el) with the meaning of forgiveness: e.g. Ps. 24 (25). 11; 64 (65).3.
  2. The priestly Christology in Hebrews is drawn with such cosmic dimensions that the sacrifice of Jesus far exceeds its provincial Jewish clothing.

Hebrews 9.12, 15

. . . he entered once for all into the Holy Place, taking not the blood of goats and calves but his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption (αἰώνιαν λύτρωσιν ).

9.12

Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred which redeems them from the transgressions (ἐξ ἀπολύτρωσιν τῶν... παραβάσεων ) under the first covenant.

9.15

These verses introduce the heart of the author's presentation of Christ's priestly work (9.15-10.18). The meaning of the terms for redemption are, as usual, to be determined by their contexts. In both cases the meaning is primarily that of the forgiveness of sins.<sup>1</sup> As in Paul, the idea of the costliness (λύτρον) is not to be forgotten. The first "redemption" lies in the context of Christ's heavenly enactment with his own blood of that which the Levitical Day of Atonement foreshadowed (9.11-14).

As to the author's use of the term "blood," J. Behm argues strongly to the effect that in Hebrews and in the New Testament generally these references to the "blood" of Christ are not references to cultic ideas of sacrifice but vivid references to his complete obedience unto death ("nur bildliche

1. So Michel, Hebraeer, pp. 204, 208; H. Windisch, Der Hebraeerbrief ("Handbuch zum Neuen Testament"; 2d ed.; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1931), p. 81, writes, "ἀπολύτρωσις = ἀφεσις." So also F. Buechsel, KThWNT, IV, 354, 357.

Einkleidung fuer den Gedanken der Selbsthingabe, des vollendeten Gehorsams gegen Gott").<sup>1</sup> This is enforced by the author's recurrent mention of obedience to the will of God.<sup>2</sup> However, V. Taylor<sup>3</sup> rightly insists that the idea of a sacrifice is probably still present even in this "bildliche Rede." As to the efficacy of blood sacrifices, William Manson writes:

No explanation at all is offered why the sanctification of the worshipper, the removal of his guilt, the expiation of his sin, the atonement of this soul to God should be made dependent on the blood of sacrifice. That necessity is assumed. It is something given. It is a thing inseparable from the age-long history of grace in Israel, and the writer of the epistle who, like a multitude of others, had found his own approach to God so prescribed and who had come along this path to the foot of the Cross, does not feel it incumbent upon him to argue its sufficiency.<sup>4</sup>

Assuming the efficacy of the sacrifice, the author emphasizes its finality (ἐφάπαξ)<sup>5</sup> and its enduring quality (αἰώνιον).

The second term of redemption (9.15) refers to the forgiveness of transgressions within the context of the new covenant.

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1. KThWNT, I, 174.

2. Cf. 5.8; 10.5-10.

3. The Atonement . . ., p. 25.

4. The Epistle to the Hebrews (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1951), p. 134.

5. G. Staehlin, "Ἰππας, κτλ.", KThWNT, I, 382f., writes, "Im NT teminus technicus fuer die seine Einmaligkeit bedingende Endgueltigkeit des Todes Christi und der dadurch geschaffenen Erloesung . . . Hb 9, 12 . . . Hier korrespondiert ἐφάπαξ mit αἰώνιος. Jeder priestliche Gang ins Heiligtum bewirkt eine voruebergehende λύτρωσις, der engueltige Gang Christi ein engueltige."



There is an "inseparable nexus"<sup>1</sup> between the redemptive sacrifice of Christ and his mediation of the new covenant. The *διαθήκης καινῆς* refers directly to the prophecy of Jeremiah (31.31-34) which the author has already quoted in full.<sup>2</sup> To him the absolute forgiveness promised in the prophecy is the important item.<sup>3</sup> The death of Christ, says the author, has put this promise into effect. He gives two reasons in support. First, all wills<sup>4</sup> take effect only at death; and, secondly, since the first covenant was ratified by sacrificial blood (necessitating a death) so must (*ἀνάγκη οὖν*, vs. 23) also the new.<sup>5</sup>

#### Hebrews 9.22

Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins (*ἁφεσις*).

Under the Levitical law the poor who could not afford an animal or bird sacrifice could bring some flour which could be used

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1. Wm. Manson, Hebrews, p. 138.
  2. See 8.8-12.
  3. Cf. 10.16-18.
  4. This word is also expressed by *διαθήκη* in the Greek.
  5. J. Behm, KThWNT, I, 174, writes: "Wie die alte Gottesordnung vom Sinai durch Blut besiegelt und in Kraft gesetzt wurde Hb 9, 18ff (Ex 24, 8: *וַיִּשָּׁךְ דָּם*), so wird die neue mit ihren Gaben durch das Blut Jesus bestaetigt und zu dauernder Geltung bebracht."

in the expiation ritual;<sup>1</sup> therefore it is accurate to say that a bloody sacrifice was almost always (σχεδόν) required.<sup>2</sup> That blood availed to effect forgiveness was, as noted above, axiomatic to the author, as to the other writers of the New Testament.<sup>3</sup>

The RSV has rightly interpreted that ἡφέσις implies forgiveness of sins, even though these final words are not in the Greek text.<sup>4</sup>

#### Hebrews 9.26b-28

But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the age to put away sin (εἰς ἀθέτησιν τῆς ἁμαρτίας) by the sacrifice of himself. (27) And just as it is appointed for men to die once, and after that comes judgment, (28) so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many (εἰς τὸ πολλῶν ἀνενεγκεῖν ἁμαρτίας), will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

Forgiveness is here expressed by the noun ἀθέτησις and the verb ἀναφέρω. "Ἀθέτησις," as F. Rienecker rightly notes, "bezeichnet juristisch die Aufhebung und Annullierung."<sup>5</sup> The finality of this doing away with sin is set over against the

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1. See Lev. 5.11-13. Cf. also Num. 31.22f.
  2. This was also true in Later Judaism. Moffatt, Hebrews, p. 131, quotes the Jewish tractate Yoma v.1, "There is no expiation except by blood."
  3. See the comprehensive collection of verses by Behm, KThWNT, I, 174.
  4. So Moffatt, Hebrews, p. 130.
  5. Sprachlicher Schluessel zum Griechischen Neuen Testament nach der Ausgabe von D. Eberhard Nestle (Neumuenster: Vereinsbuchhandlung G. Ihlhoff & Co., 1938), p. 676.

repeated sacrifices in the earthly sanctuary. "His sacrifice needs no repetition since it is not only completely effective but also because it has come 'at the end of the age.'"<sup>1</sup>

Verse 28 contains a clear echo of Isaiah 53.12 (LXX: καὶ αὐτὸς ἁμαρτίας πολλῶν ἀνήνεγκεν ). This indicates that the author shared the common tradition of the early church which saw in the Isaianic sin-bearing servant a pre-figure of Christ.<sup>2</sup>

#### Hebrews 10.4,11

For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins (ἀφαρεῖν ἁμαρτίας )

.....

And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins (οὐδέποτε δύνανται περιελεῖν ἁμαρτίας ).

Ἀφαρεῖν is in the LXX a common expression for forgiveness<sup>3</sup> and the cancellation of sins,<sup>4</sup> and περιαιρέω is here to be considered its equivalent.<sup>5</sup>

In these verses there are apparent repudiations of the old sacrificial system. The author says that they served only as recurrent reminders of sins and did not cleanse the conscience.

1. A. C. Purdy, "Hebrews," Inter. Bible, XI, 697.

2. See Dodd, According to . . ., p. 94.

3. E.g., Ex. 34.7,9.

4. E.g., Lev. 10.17.

5. So Moffatt, Hebrews, p. 140; Michel, Hebraeae, p. 226, note 5.

However, as H. Windisch<sup>1</sup> and others point out, though this is a radical view, it is not a total rejection of the efficacy of the old sacrifices. Rather they are to be considered earthly types which were effective in their day but which are superseded by the true sacrifice of Christ and, consequently, now abolished (*ἀναπεῖ*, 10.9). Paul's attitude toward the law offers a close parallel to this author's view of Israel's cult.<sup>2</sup>

### Hebrews 10.10, 14-18

Having presented the failure of the old cult, he now reiterates "his conviction that the single, effective offering of Christ . . . has achieved the goal of the new covenant, the forgiveness of sins."<sup>3</sup>

And by that will we have been sanctified (*ἡγιασμένοι ἐσμεν*) through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

. . . . .

For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified (*ἡγιασθέντες*).

(15) And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying,

(16) 'This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord:  
I will put my laws on their hearts,  
and write them on their minds,'

(17) then he adds,  
'I will remember their sins and  
their misdeeds no more.'

(18) Where there is forgiveness (*ἄφεσις*) of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.

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1. Hebraeerbrief, p. 89.

2. See Michel, Hebraeer, p. 222; Wm. Manson, Hebrews, p. 143.

3. Purdy, Inter. Bible, XI, p. 699.



Forgiveness is expressed by the verb ἁγιάζω (another word with cultic associations in the LXX and with a close relationship to forgiveness)<sup>1</sup> and by declaring again that Jeremiah's prophecy was fulfilled. This forms the apex and the close of the author's main argument. Forgiveness is complete and eternal; therefore, his brethren can with confidence (παρρησίαν) enter the sanctuary by the new and living way (10.19f.).

### Hebrews 10.21f.

The subsequent references to forgiveness do not add to what has already been observed. It will be sufficient only to notice, as the theme recurs, how rich the author's vocabulary for forgiveness continues to be.

. . . and since we have a great priest over the house of God, (22) let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean (ῥεραντισμένοι) from an evil conscience and our bodies washed (λελουσμένοι) with pure water.

The interpretation of James Moffatt appears to be correct:

The metaphors are sacerdotal; as priests were sprinkled with blood and bathed in water, to qualify them for their sacred service, so Christians may approach God with all confidence, on the basis of Christ's sacrifice, since they have been . . . sprinkled<sup>2</sup> and so purified from . . . [an evil conscience]. . . Then the writer adds, καὶ λελουσμένοι τὸ σῶμα ὕδατι καθαρῷ suggesting that baptism corresponded to the bathing of priests (e.g. in Lev. 16.4). Once and for all, at baptism, Christians have been purified from guilty stains by the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice.<sup>3</sup>

1. See Otto Procksch, "ἁγίος, κ.τ.λ.," KThWNT, I, 112f. The verb appears often in Hebrews with the meaning to cleanse from sin; cf. 2.11; 10.14, 29; 13.12.
2. There is a frequent use of this verb in Hebrews (9.13, 19, 21; 12.24). Cf. Num. 19.9, passim.
3. Hebrews, p. 144.

A similar use of "sprinkled" occurs in another memorable assertion:

But you have come . . . (24) to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks more graciously than the blood of Abel.

12.22,24

H. Windisch summarizes well: "Auch der Maertyrer Abel ist ein Schattenbild Christi, sein Blut ruft nach Rache (11.4), Jesu Blut nach Versoehnung."<sup>1</sup>

#### Hebrews 6.4-6

There are several familiar passages which make reference to circumstances which make for the impossibility of repentance and may imply a limitation on divine forgiveness.

For it is impossible to restore again to repentance those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, (5) and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, (6) if they then commit apostasy, since they crucify the Son of God on their own account and hold him up to contempt.

This passage and its kindred (2.2f.; 10.26-31; 12.17, 25-29) are among the distinctive marks of this epistle, and they have given rise to much discussion. They throw light on the spiritual condition of the readers and must be dealt with in determining the purpose and destination of the letter. From its context it is obvious that the passage printed above constitutes a warning against apostasy and not a statement that such has actually

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1. Hebraeerbrief, p. 114.

occurred among his readers.<sup>1</sup> The warning is that apostasy<sup>2</sup> from full participation in the eschatological gifts of the Christian faith precludes a second repentance. The inability to repent under certain circumstances was familiar to Judaism<sup>3</sup> but far more serious to this author because of the once-for-all nature of the revelation and work of Christ. Land that has received such gracious rain (i.e. the eschatological gifts of Christ) and has borne only thistles is worthless and near to being cursed (6.7f.).

This passage implies no limitation on the forgiveness conveyed in God's redemptive act in Christ, but it emphasizes the serious consequences of failure to appreciate it and remain obedient. As Moffatt writes, "only those who fully realize what Jesus means for forgiveness will be able to hold out."<sup>4</sup> To re-crucify the Son who was given once-for-all is fatal.<sup>5</sup>

Precisely the same idea is repeated, though more strongly, in 10.26-31.

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1. Cf. 6.9ff. This seems to be the case in the other passages also.
  2. *παράπρεσόντως* is to be interpreted in the light of 3.12 and, like the deliberate sin in 10.26, is not a particular offense but a general attitude (*Gesamthaltung*). See W. Michaelis, "πίπτω, κ.τ.λ.", *KThWNT*, VI, 171.
  3. Strack-Bill., III, 689f., gives examples of five situations where repentance was considered impossible in the old synagogue.
  4. *Hebrews*, p. 77.
  5. The idea is reminiscent of Mk. 3.29 and parallels.

For if we deliberately sin after receiving the knowledge of truth . . . /i.e. if we act as one who has/ . . .  
 (29) . . . spurned the Son of God, and profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and outraged the Spirit of grace . . .

from vss. 26,29

The result of this kind of apostasy is that there "no longer remains a sacrifice for sins"<sup>1</sup> rather a fearful judgment.

Divine forgiveness of sins in Jesus Christ requires a persistent life of faithful and expectant discipleship to him. If this is not kept alive forgiveness is lost.

Nothing is said in these passages as to whether the church had the right to decide who had and who had not committed such an apostasy. The wisest course for the church in the case of apparent apostasy would seem to be to imitate the pastor's concern of this author--sound the warning but leave the vengeance and the judgment to God (10.30f.).

Numerous other words and passages in Hebrews might be examined for their relationship to the forgiveness of sins.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, the main contributions of this epistle to the general study have now been reviewed.

#### Summary

1. The concept of forgiveness is colored by the grand contrast (the life and work of Jesus with the old sacrificial

1. Heb. 10.26. Also in later Judaism the apostate could not bring an offering. See Strack-Bill, III, 743.

2. E.g., τελειώω, μεάνοια, βαπτισμός, σωτηρία, έλεος, χάρις. For the possible reference to the Eucharist in 13.10 see the able discussion by Taylor, The Atonement . . . , pp. 105-10.



system) which the epistle presents. It means the removal of the ethical-religious defilement in men which stands as a barrier between them and God. The act of forgiveness removes that barrier and opens up a way of access for sinners into the presence of the holy God.

2. God is the one who initiates and brings to pass the whole deed of forgiveness. There is no hint of Jesus' sacrifice placating God's anger or changing his attitude toward sinners.

3. Forgiveness is mediated to men through the high priestly work of Jesus, the Son of God. This work centers in his vicarious,<sup>1</sup> sacrificial death.

4. The gift of forgiveness in Christ is in fulfillment of the promise of scripture.

5. This forgiveness is complete, final and eternal--  
"ein fuer allemal."

6. It is offered to all peoples, yet is only valid for those who cling fast to the Christ and who to the end keep faith in the unseen reality of Christ's expiation and consummation of his work.

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1. See, specifically, Heb. 2.9; 6.20; 7.25; 9.14, 24.

## CHAPTER VII

### TESTIMONY CONCERNING DIVINE FORGIVENESS IN THE JOHANNINE WRITINGS

The fourth gospel, the three Johannine epistles and the apocalypse, which traditionally have been attributed to the apostle John, may be grouped together for the purposes of this study. This grouping is partially justified on the basis of their authorship. Although scholars today generally deny direct apostolic authorship to any of them,<sup>1</sup> there is wide agreement that the gospel and the epistles are by the same author. This man whom we may call the "Elder," was probably a close disciple of the apostle.<sup>2</sup> The apocalypse has some affinity to the others, but its differences are too marked. It is generally ascribed to another. He must have been a Palestinian

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1. The Dead Sea Scrolls have shown that many of the themes of the fourth gospel and I John were not as strange to early first century Judaism as was once supposed. This does not prove apostolic authorship, but it gives greater probability to their author (s) being a first century Jew. See Raymond E. Brown, S.J., "The Qumran Scrolls and the Johannine Gospel and Epistles," The Scrolls . . ., ed. K. Stendahl, pp. 183-207.
  2. See the brief summary of critical opinion by Hunter, Interpreting the New Testament . . ., 78-96.

Jew who migrated to Asia Minor and may be called "John the Seer."<sup>1</sup> All five works have traditionally been connected with the church in Asia Minor (around Ephesus), and there is general agreement among scholars that they were written during or in the "neighborhood" of the last decade of the first century.

### The Fourth Gospel

One of the familiar verses of this gospel reads:

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

3.16

Presented in many different ways this is the recurrent theme of the whole gospel. The key to the message is the word "life."<sup>2</sup> This was brought by Jesus and appropriated in the present by believing that he is the Son, the Revealer of God, and by abiding in close discipleship to him.<sup>3</sup>

At the end<sup>4</sup> of the gospel the author states his purpose for writing:

but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name.

20.31

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1. So R. H. Charles, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John (New York: Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1920), I, xxxviii-1.
  2. See, e.g., 1.4; 3.15f.; 3.36; 4.14; etc. There are 36 occurrences of  $\text{ζωή}$  in the fourth gospel.
  3. R. Bultmann, " $\text{ζωή, κ.τ.λ.}$ ," KThWNT, II, 871-74, gives a good summary of this. One need not follow his idea of the source of the author's terminology.
  4. Chapter 21 is probably a later appendix. See Barrett, John, pp. 479ff.

When one arrives at this point, after reading through the gospel, <sup>one</sup> ~~he~~ must agree that the material has been skilfully arranged to give emphasis to this purpose. Recognizing, then, that the presentation of "life" through faith in the obedient Son is the major theme, we may give particular attention to the idea of forgiveness.

The only use of a specific term for forgiveness occurs in 20.23 which has already been discussed (p. 197), but the idea of forgiveness is contained in several passages.

#### "The Lamb of God"

John the Baptist witnesses to Jesus with the words:

Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!

1.29b (cf. vs. 36)

ὁ ἄμνός τοῦ θεοῦ --this title, the Lamb of God, has provoked much investigation. J. Jeremias<sup>1</sup> and others before him have<sup>2</sup> held that the probable Aramaic behind ἄμνός would have better been translated παῖς referring to the servant of God of Is. 53. Though this is possible, others have decided that John intended to use the word "Lamb."<sup>3</sup> For the purposes of this

1. "ἄρρω, κ.τ.λ.", KThWNT, I, 185; "ἄμνός, κ.τ.λ.", KThWNT, I, 343; The Servant . . . , pp. 82f.

2. C. F. Burney and C. J. Ball. For a statement of their positions see Bernard, John, I, 45f.

3. So Bernard, John, I, 45f.; Barrett, John, p. 147. Such a title for Jesus was familiar to others in the early church. Cf. ἄμνός Acts 8.32; I Pet. 1.19; ἀρνίον, Rev. 5.6, passim; πάσχα I Cor. 5.7; cf. Jn. 19.36.



study it makes no substantial difference; for as commentators have pointed out, the title, as it stands, probably refers to Jesus as being both the paschal lamb of Ex. 12<sup>1</sup> and the lamb of Is. 53.7.<sup>2</sup> Both these would seem to have primary reference to the death of Christ.<sup>3</sup> Whether or not previous Jewish thought had considered the Passover sacrifice to have had value for dealing with sins,<sup>4</sup> the fusion here of the idea with that of the servant allows the possibility, and the subsequent phrase *ὁ ἀΐρων τὴν ἁμαρτίαν τοῦ κόσμου* lends this interpretation strong support.

The verb *ἀΐρω* (used with sin) has a rich heritage in the Old Testament and in later Jewish writings, as Strack-Billerbeck have indicated.<sup>5</sup> It is used repeatedly to express God's forgiveness of sins. Consequently, it seems probable that

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1. In accord with Jn. 19.36.
  2. So Walter Bauer, *Das Johannesevangelium* (3rd ed.; Tuebingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1933), p. 36; Strack-Bill., II, 367ff.; Barrett, *John*, p. 147. However, C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: University Press, 1953), pp. 230-38, strongly supports the idea that the term does not refer to either of these but to the apocalyptic leader (Messiah) of the people, who overcomes evil and puts away sin by force. C. K. Barrett, "The Lamb of God," *NTS*, I (1954/55), 210-18, seems to the present writer to have cogently answered Dodd's argument.
  3. So R. Bultmann, *Das Evangelium des Johannes* ("Meyers Kommentar"; 11th Auflage; Goettingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1950), p. 66.
  4. Strack-Bill., II, 369, claim that it did.
  5. Vol. II, 363ff.

the writer is using the phrase to stress the power of the death of Christ for the destroying of sin and the cancelling of guilt.<sup>1</sup>

The words *τοῦ κόσμου* sound a note of the universal efficacy of this forgiveness which was not heard in the old rabbinic literature<sup>2</sup> but is typical of the message of the Johannine writings.

How could John the Baptist make such a profound witness to Jesus and his work when the ministry of Jesus had scarcely begun? The answer, as contemporary scholars usually indicate, is that the author has probably developed John's testimony to the Messiah into a more discerning declaration than might be expected of him.<sup>3</sup> It must be acknowledged that the author of the fourth gospel has written a theological interpretation of the person and work of Jesus. His discourse material is based on history, but he develops and makes explicit the theology which Jesus probably left implicit and seminal. So, too, with this statement by the Baptist; it may not be accurate history, but it is accurate interpretation and is consentient with the rest of the New Testament writings. The author uses it to set the stage for his call to faith; his first witness can in profound truth say "Behold the Messiah of God,"

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1. So Bultmann, *Johannes*, p. 66.

2. See Strack-Bill., II, 370.

3. So Strack-Bill., II, 369; Bernard, *John*, I, 45f.; Barrett, *NTS*, I (1954/55), 210ff.

who through suffering and death takes away the guilt and sin of the whole world!"

### "Born of Water"

A Pharisee named Nicodemus comes to Jesus by night. Jesus speaks to him about the kingdom of God. Among other things, he says:

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

3.5

Although R. Bultmann,<sup>1</sup> following H. H. Wendt and others,<sup>2</sup> thinks that ὕδατος καὶ is an interpolation by an early hand, other scholars have argued cogently that it belongs and fits well in the context.<sup>3</sup> The importance of the passage for the present study is its almost certain reference to Christian baptism. This conclusion is supported by the fact that the meeting with Nicodemus and the consequent discourse are set in the midst of passages which are concerned with baptism--that of John in contrast to that of Jesus.<sup>4</sup> From our previous observations on the significance of baptism we may assume that it was

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1. Theology . . ., II, 58.

2. See the list given by Bauer, Johannesevangelium, p. 53.

3. So Bernard, John, I, 104f.; Bauer, Johannesevangelium, p. 53; Barrett, John, p. 174.

4. Cf. 1.26, 33; 3.22-4.2.

<sup>1</sup>  
inter alia a sign of God's forgiveness of sins. The point to be noticed here is that such forgiveness is accompanied by the gift of the Holy Spirit (3.5) and produces such a radical re-orientation of life that the author calls it a new and heavenly birth (γεννηθῆναι ἄνωθεν). The "forgiveness of sins" has thus been incorporated into the larger idea of life which is new and eternal (3.15f.). It is also notable that the author connects baptism (and thus forgiveness) closely to the person of Jesus, the divine envoy from God (3.13, 16f.), and his suffering death (3.14).<sup>2</sup>

#### God's Love Includes Forgiveness

Growing out of the same interview with Nicodemus are these words:

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. (17) For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him. (18) He who believes in him is not condemned; he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

3.16-18

The initial occurrence of the word ἀγαπάω (3.16) calls attention to another major theme of the Johannine writings--God's love for the world. This love initiates the redemptive action. Christ

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1. This association is so strongly attested in the New Testament that this author would have had to explicitly reject it if he did not want to convey that idea.
  2. Cf. 8.28; 12.32f. where ὁψώ again refers to the death of Christ. It here includes his exaltation as commentators point out.



mediates that love and creates a community of people which is to respond to God and each other in love.<sup>1</sup> That this love for the world includes the forgiveness of sins seems obvious.

Ethelbert Stauffer<sup>2</sup> well observes that behind the dual command of Jesus to love God and one's neighbor (which specifically includes the difficult command to love one's enemies) stands the new situation which God has brought about by his own forgiving love. When Stauffer summarizes the idea of love in the whole New Testament, his words are especially applicable to John 3.16. He writes:

Jesus proclaims the divine mercy, not as the temper in which God always acts--pardonner, c'est son métier--but as an unparalleled event, the possibility of which is grounded in God alone, placing men here and now in a perfectly new situation. Jesus brings the forgiveness of sins, and when a man experiences that, a completely new power of overflowing love is released within him . . . God has by his act of forgiveness, introduced a new order into the world, which entirely surpasses the old, doing away with its scale of values, creating new tasks and possibilities. The new relation of God to man lays the foundation for a new relation of man to man . . . God's love, which breaks into the world at this great moment in history, is pardoning love.<sup>3</sup>

This could not be made any plainer than is done in another passage probably by the same author:

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1. Cf. e.g., Jn. 5.42; 13.1, 23, 34; 14.21; 15.9f.; 16.27 ( $\phi\lambda\epsilon\omega$ ); 17.23; I Jn. 3.1; 4.7,8,9,10,11,16,19.
  2. Gottfried Quell and Ethelbert Stauffer, Love, trans. and ed. J. R. Coates ("Bible Key Words from KthWNT"; London: A. & C. Black, 1949), pp. 45ff.
  3. Ibid., pp. 49-51.

Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God. (8) He who does not love does not know God; for God is love. (9) In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. (10) In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins. (11) Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

#### I Jn. 4.7-11

Forgiveness is included in the wider term "love"; it is made possible in the historic coming and dying<sup>1</sup> of Jesus and is received by those who believe in him as the Son of God (Jn. 3.16,18). However, this same love becomes condemnation to the one who does not believe in him (3.18).

#### Healings Imply Forgiveness

The idea of forgiveness appears again in two healing passages. In one Jesus heals a sick man at the pool of Bethzatha in Jerusalem (5.2-18). Sometime after the healing he found the man in the temple and said:

See, you are well! Sin no more that nothing worse befall you.

5.14b

C. K. Barrett's comment seems correct. The "whole chapter implies a treatment of evil too radical to be exhausted in the healing of physical disease, and the command to sin no more suggests that sins up to this point have already been dealt with."<sup>2</sup>

1. ἔδωκεν, Jn. 3.16, probably includes his death as does παρέδωκεν Rom. 8.32. Cf. the probable references to the death of Jesus in Jn. 10.11,15; 15.13.

In a second healing passage (Chap. 9) Jesus is presented as the light of the world (9.5). This is illustrated by his giving sight to a man born blind. After the healing, the man believes in the "Son of man," i.e. he receives spiritual sight (9.35-39). The Pharisees, who see physically and think that they see spiritually (in holding to the Sabbath law), close their eyes to the true light--the person of Jesus. The final comments of Jesus are significant:

For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind. (10) Some of the Pharisees near him heard this, and they said to him, 'Are we also blind?' (41) Jesus said to them, 'If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, 'We see,' your guilt remains (ἡ ἀμαρτία ὑμῶν μένει ).

9.39-41

The passage implies two things for this study. (1) The contrast which the author presents between the response to Jesus of the blind man and that of the Pharisees (9.41) indicates that the former had received the forgiveness of sins, i.e. the removal of guilt, and the latter had not. This forgiveness presumably came through Jesus; and it was received by faith, apparently in the person of Jesus as the heavenly Son of man, the revelation of God. The conflict with the Jews is illustrative of the rejection which Jesus suffers in order to be the mediator of this grace (healing and forgiveness) of God. (2) As in Mark 3.29 (οὐκ ἔχει ἄφεσιν εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα ) there is a continuing state (μένει )

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2. John, p. 213. So also Hoskyns, The Fourth Gospel, p. 266.

of guilt for those who deliberately reject Christ; the implication is that he is the only cure for sin that exists.<sup>1</sup>

### Believing in Jesus Essential for Forgiveness

Two passages may be noted together:

I told you that you would die in your sins, for you will die in your sins unless you believe that I am he.

8.24

If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, (32) and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.

8.31b-32

In the first the word of Jesus to the Jews is very plain. There is no forgiveness of sins apart from believing that Jesus is one with God. This specific confession is suggested by the *ἐγώ εἰμι* of 8.24 and by the fact that in this chapter the Christology is exceedingly high.<sup>2</sup>

In the second statement the message of forgiveness is presented positively. To know the truth (*γινώσθε τὴν ἀλήθειαν*) is to recognize the revelation of God in the person and words of Jesus.<sup>3</sup> This truth makes one free (*ἐλευθερώσει*). The freedom is primarily from enslaving sin (8.34)<sup>4</sup> but includes

1. See Barrett, *John*, p. 304, on this point.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 276.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 139.

4. So Heinrich Schlier, "ἐλευθερος, κ.τ.λ.," *KThWNT*, II, 492; R. Bultmann, "ἀλγθεια, κ.τ.λ.," *KThWNT*, I, 247.



freedom from spiritual death (8.51).<sup>1</sup>

Passages on Lord's Supper Teach  
about Forgiveness

The Lord's Supper in the early church implied a great deal about the forgiving mercy of God. Quite probably there is a reference to it in Chapter 6 (especially vss. 35-59). If so, then it is evident that for this author the significance of the Supper is based on the obedient death of Jesus. The same affirmation recurs in 19.34 where emphasis is given to the phenomenon of "blood and water" coming from the pierced side of the dead body of Jesus. The author may well be pointing out that both sacraments are rooted in the event of Golgotha.

The foot-washing episode in 13.1-11 has long been recognized as being more than an example of the humble love of the Son which the disciples should imitate. In all probability it was meant to interpret his imminent death (see 13.1). Under the images of washing and cleansing Jesus is pointing to the significance of his coming baptism into death, which would effect a cleansing or forgiveness of sins for his disciples (cf. I Jn. 1.7).

What I am doing you do not know now, but afterward you will understand . . . If I do not wash you, you have no part in me.

13.7b, 8b

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1. Freedom from sin, death and the law is a recurrent idea in the New Testament. See the good summary by Schlier, KThWNT, II, 492.

There are other passages<sup>1</sup> which might be examined for their teaching on forgiveness, and one could find the idea imbedded in some other terms<sup>2</sup> which the author employs, but in this brief review his main contributions have been touched upon.

### The Johannine Epistles

The Johannine epistles are well known for the monumental service they have rendered in holding the Gospel and the Law in inseparable unity:

Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

I Jn. 4.11<sup>3</sup>

They are equally well known for their striving against docetic interpretations of the nature of Christ.<sup>4</sup> Yet these ideas do not exhaust their message, for the longer letter shares all the basic ideas that were common to the kerygma and teaching of the early church.<sup>5</sup>

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1. Cf. Jn. 12.40. This idea has already been discussed in connection with Mk. 4.12.

2. E.g., χάρις, σωτηρία, σῶζω, εἰρήνη, ἀγαπάω.

3. See also 2.3-11, 28f.; 3.4-18, 23; 4.7-12; 4.19-5.3; II Jn. 5f.; III Jn. 3f., 11.

4. See I Jn. 1.1-3; 4.1-3; 5.6-8.

5. Dodd, The Johannine . . ., xxvii-xlii, compares the contents of I Jn. with the kerygma and teaching of the early church and concludes: "the substance of his message to his readers is neither more nor less than the original and unchanging content of the Church's common faith, embodied in the Gospel and Commandment, and attested by primary witnesses" (xlii). So also Taylor, The Atonement . . ., p. 135.

The first of these epistles is the only one which clearly refers to God's forgiveness.<sup>1</sup> This it does repeatedly, yet it is obvious that forgiveness forms but a part of the larger benefit which God has bestowed. As in the gospel, the chief term for the total divine gift is "life" (ζωή).<sup>2</sup>

A look at several passages will be sufficient to give the substance of the Elder's message of forgiveness.

# 1.

. . . but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin (καθαρίζει ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ πάσης ἁμαρτίας). (8) If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. (9) If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins (ὅτι ἀφ' ἡμῶν τὰς ἁμαρτίας) and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (10) If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

(2.1) My little children, I am writing this to you so that you may not sin; but if any one does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; (2) and he is the expiation for our sins (αὐτός ἱλασμός ἐστιν περὶ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν), and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

I Jn. 1.7-2.2

These words about forgiveness appear against the background of heretical (Gnostic) teaching. Evidently, there was the tendency among some to regard the Christian life as sinless (1.8,10).

The Elder repudiates this as being self-deceiving. Those who live according to truth and walk in the light see things as they

1. ἀφίημι, 1.9; 2.12; καθαρίζω 1.7,9; ἱλασμός, 2.2; 4.10; αἵρω 3.5.

2. See I Jn. 1.1f.; 2.25; 3.14f.; 5.11f., 13,20. See also his use of "truth" and "light," as in the fourth gospel.

really are. Christians are sinners, but they are sinners who have been and are forgiven. This forgiveness is from God who through the sending, ministry and death<sup>1</sup> of his Son cleansed them from all sin (1.8). The author uses both legal and cultic terminology (καθαρίζω, ἄφεσις, ἑλασμός) which is already familiar from the earlier writings of the church. The general message of the epistle indicates that they imply a thoroughly religious-ethical idea of sin.

Like Paul<sup>2</sup> the Elder declares that the pardoning mercy of God springs from his faithfulness (πιστός) and righteousness (δικαίος) (1.9). For him there was no contradiction between the justice and mercy of God. Nor is this retracted by the affirmation that sinners have an advocate (παράκλητον) before the Father (2.1). The Son does not plead before an all-wrathful God. In the author's view it is always the Father's

1. Bultmann, *Theology* . . . , II, 54, writes that the references to the death of Jesus (1.7; 2.2 and 4.10) are probably early redactional glosses. Of course, there is no manuscript evidence for his position, but he maintains that the doctrine of the atoning death of Jesus is foreign to the general thought in John's gospel and epistles. At least, it is very subordinate to the overwhelming importance of the incarnation. There is some truth in this, but it does not warrant such radical judgment on the passages mentioned. Buechsel, *KThWNT*, III, 318, appears to be more in line with the truth when he writes, "Der ἑλασμός haengt nicht einseitig an der Einzelleistung des Sterbens, sondern an dem Ganzen der Sendung und der Person Jesu, zu dem freilich sein Sterben unablosbar hinzugehoert 5, 6 vgl 3,16; 1,7."

2. Cf. Rom. 1.16f.; 3.21-26.



initiating love which makes provision for forgiveness through the Son (4.7-11).

Three other observations may be made about these verses. Forgiveness is available to believers in the present and future (1.9; 2.1). Those who receive it, must confess (ὁμολογῶμεν) their sins. Not to do so makes it obvious that forgiveness is not valued. Finally, Jesus is the means of forgiveness (ἱλασμός)<sup>1</sup> for all men, not simply one group (2.2).

2. Other passages bring out similar points which need little comment.

I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven for his sake (ἀφέωνται ὑμῖν αἱ ἁμαρτίαι διὰ τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ) I Jn. 2.12

You know that he appeared to take away sins (ἵνα τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἄρῃ), and in him there is no sin. I Jn. 3.5

Both these refer to Jesus as God's instrument in effecting forgiveness. The important point here is that both are used in the context of urgent pastoral appeals to the readers. The first (2.12) is one of several expressions of the blessedness of the new age which Christ brought. On the basis of them the Elder exhorts the readers not to love the world nor the things in it (2.15). The second (3.5) calls attention to the work and character of Christ. He who took away<sup>2</sup> sins and who himself was

1. Used only here and in 4.10. Buechsel, KThWNT, III, 318, writes: "ἱλασμός ist hier die Beseitigung der Sünde als Schuld Gott gegenüber . . ."

2. The verb (αἵρω) is the same as that used in Jn. 1.29.

without sin, must be imitated by those who claim that they are his and abide in him. True children of God do not habitually<sup>1</sup> sin. Those who do not act rightly nor love their brothers are no children of God (3.9f.). This same appeal recurs again in possibly the most familiar passage of the epistle, 4.7-10, which has already been quoted.

3. Finally, there is the possibility of an unforgivable sin:

If any one sees his brother committing what is not a mortal sin, he will ask, and God will give him life for those whose sin is not mortal. There is sin which is mortal; I do not say that one is to pray for that. (17) All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin which is not mortal.

I Jn. 5.16f.

The Elder has written of the confidence with which the Christian may come to God in prayer (5.14f.). Here he illustrates that confidence. If any one sees his brother sinning, he will<sup>2</sup> pray for him, and God will give life to that one. The only qualification is that the sin committed be not a mortal sin.

It is notable that Christians have responsibility in the matter of God's forgiveness of others. Just as in the gospel where believers are charged with the power to "forgive" or "retain" the sins of others (Jn. 20.23), so here prayer for them is

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1. Dodd, The Johannine . . ., 78ff., shows that the apparent contradiction between 1.8-2.2 and 3.4-10 is partially resolved by noticing the aorist subjunctive in 2.1 and the present subjunctive in 3.6. He gives further explanation, but realizes that the inconsistency may not be resolvable.
  2. The use of the future,  $\alpha\iota\tau\eta\sigma\epsilon\iota$ , probably gives the verb imperative force.

a specified means to that end.<sup>1</sup>

The meaning of the "mortal sin" (ἁμαρτία πρὸς θάνατον) can only be surmised. If 4.2f. is in the author's mind, then the rejection of Jesus as the Christ is the sin unto death.<sup>2</sup> This would be consentient with the probable meaning of Mk. 3.28f. and with the recurrent κρίσις (decision and division) which the coming of Jesus precipitated according to the fourth gospel. However, the author refers to this sin so vaguely that no certain definition of it can be obtained. Whatever the mortal sin may be, the Elder writes οὐ περὶ ἐκείνης λέγω ἵνα ἐρωτήσῃ. There is doubt in his mind about praying for such a sinner. As B. F. Westcott,<sup>3</sup> and others have noted, prayer for such sinners is not enjoined neither is it forbidden.

#### SUMMARY (The Gospel and the Epistles)

1. Jesus Christ takes away guilt and sin.
2. He accomplishes this through his coming into the world, as an envoy of God, through his obedience to the will of the Father, and through his sacrificial death and crowning exaltation.
3. In Johannine thought forgiveness is generally included in larger terms (e.g. "life," "eternal life," or "love"), and, when it is mentioned, it is usually accompanied by other gifts (e.g., the Holy Spirit, freedom, light, truth).

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1. Cf. I Jn. 3.16 where death may be another means; love in I Pet. 4.8.
  2. Quell et al, Sin, p. 73, writes that the sin unto death consists in rejecting the "I am" of Christ; when one rejects him "he remains in his sin and dies in his sin, missing all that Christ came to bring."
  3. The Epistles of St. John (4th ed.; London: Macmillan & Co., 1902), p. 192.

4. Forgiveness is received only by confessing one's sins and by believing that Jesus is the Son of God, sent by God to reveal God and to accomplish his work. To refuse to believe is to become blind and to suffer condemnation. It is possibly a "mortal sin."
5. When divine forgiveness has been received, it should issue immediately in love for one's brothers. Not to love is to give proof that one does not truly live in the state of forgiveness.
6. God's forgiveness is effective for the whole world.

#### The Revelation to John

The apocalypse rarely mentions sin<sup>1</sup> and employs none of the customary terms for forgiveness. The work seems to be almost wholly occupied with the matter of Christ's protection and vindication of his persecuted church and in the call to endurance and faithfulness against the claims of Caesar.<sup>2</sup> Soteriological teaching for contemporary living appears subordinate to the future cosmic struggle between the forces of God and those of Satan and the demonic powers (epitomized on earth in the power of Rome). The apparent neglect to give expression to God's forgiving mercy and saving activity and the emphasis on futuristic eschatology have given rise to sharp criticism of the Seer's message. C. H. Dodd writes that "we are bound to judge that in its conception of the character of God and his attitude toward man the book falls far below the level not only of the teaching of

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1. Only in 1.5; 18.4f.

2. See 13.10b; 14.12.



Jesus but of the best parts of the Old Testament."<sup>1</sup> Other scholars have denied that this is the case.<sup>2</sup> They point out that the apocalyptist has a special purpose--to encourage a persecuted church. He could assume that his readers had received teaching about the character and deeds of God and could, therefore, concentrate on his immediate purpose. Furthermore, they suggest that his writing shows that he does, in fact, have a Christian conception of God. It can be cogently argued that his doctrine of God is implied in all his affirmations about the Son, who shares God's throne.<sup>3</sup> Of the significance of the Son in this book it is true to say with H. H. Rowley, that "this apocalypse is first and foremost a vision of the glory of Christ, and of the eternal triumph over all the forces of evil which He is destined to achieve."<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, the idea of the self-sacrificing love of the Son has probably informed the whole of this work. If so, then the clear implication is that such love

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1. Quoted by R. H. Preston and A. T. Hanson, The Revelation of Saint John The Divine (London: SCM Press, 1949), 30f., from Dodd, The Apostolic Preaching . . ., p. 89. Dodd discusses the unbalanced emphasis on the future (in Revelation), pp. 86-91.
  2. Preston and Hanson, Revelation, 30ff.; Charles, Revelation, I, cixff.; I. T. Beckwith, The Apocalypse of John (New York: Macmillan & Co., 1919), pp. 310ff.; H. H. Rowley, The Relevance of Apocalyptic (London: Lutterworth, 1944), pp. 117-28; E. F. Scott, The Book of Revelation (2d ed.; London: SCM Press, 1940), pp. 106-20.
  3. See 5.6; 7.17; 22.1,3 where God and Christ appear to share almost equal glory and authority.
  4. The Relevance . . ., p. 127.

is fully in accord with the will of God and, indeed, proceeds<sup>1</sup> from him.

The few passages which refer to God's forgiveness may be noted specifically.

#### Forgiveness through the Death of Jesus

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood (6) and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

1.5b-6

The phrase loosed us from (λύσαντε ἡμᾶς ἐκ) our sins has the best manuscript support. However, the reference would still be to forgiveness and deliverance from sin if the familiar metaphor of washing (λούσαντε . . . ὑπό) were to be read here. The aorist tense, the reference to the blood and the word ἐξεκέντησαν (vs. 7) make it clear that the writer is referring to the death of Christ. For him that death so effectively dealt with sins that he and his readers stand forgiven (free of sins).<sup>2</sup> The ascription goes further to affirm Christ's continuing love (ἀγαπῶντε) for them and to give praise for his establishment of them as a kingdom and priests to God. The latter is closely connected to the death of Christ which the author possibly interprets as marking the point of the new exodus for the church,

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1. So Charles, Revelation, I, ex.

2. So Taylor, The Atonement . . . , p. 39.

the "new Israel."<sup>1</sup>

This idea of freedom from sins (obtained by Christ at the cost of his life) is never again so clearly expressed, but it may lie under the surface of other passages in the apocalypse. It possibly appears in the hymn which again sounds the note of the new exodus:<sup>2</sup>

and they sang a new song, saying,  
 'Worthy art thou to take the scroll and to open its seals,  
 for thou wast slain and by thy blood didst ransom (λύτρωσις)  
 men for God  
 from every tribe and tongue and people and nation,  
 (10) and hast made them a kingdom and priests to our God,  
 and they shall reign on earth.

5.9f.

Moreover, it may lie in the background of the references to the "Lamb" and the "blood of the Lamb." This necessitates a look at another important passage.

#### The Slain Lamb

Following his letters to the churches (Chapters 2 and 3), the Seer has two visions which introduce his long series of seven visions. The first of these two visions is of the throne of God (Chapter 4), and the second is of the Lamb of God (Chapter 5). The latter contains this verse:

And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders, I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth;

5.6

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1. Compare Rev. 1.6 with Ex. 19.6; Is. 61.6.

2. So J. Jeremias, KThWNT, I, 345; J. Behm, KThWNT, I, 174; but see contra F. Buechsel, KThWNT, I, 126.

Just as in the case of the Lamb ( $\lambda\mu\nu\acute{o}\varsigma$ ) in Jn. 1.29, there has been much discussion about the meaning of  $\lambda\rho\nu\acute{\iota}\omicron\nu$  as applied to Jesus.<sup>1</sup> The Seer uses it no less than 28 times to refer to Christ, so there is little doubt that a right interpretation of it is important for understanding his whole work. This verse (5.6), where the title is first used, probably gives the key to its meaning throughout.

Part of the significance of the title lies in the fact that Christ is the Lamb which was slain ( $\acute{\omega}\varsigma \epsilon\sigma\phi\alpha\gamma\mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu\omicron\nu$ ); even in exaltation he retained in his body the scars of his death wounds.<sup>2</sup> Combined with this is a second idea contained in the reference to his exaltation, his living presence in the council of God, his seven horns<sup>3</sup> and seven eyes.<sup>4</sup> The thought is that he is the powerful, apocalyptic warrior and the authoritative, divine judge. R. H. Charles writes:

Under the designation of 'the Lamb,' therefore, there lie the ideas of sacrifice and triumphant might. Out of love to man and with a view to redeem him, Jesus sacrifices Himself . . . The Lamb who conquers is the Lamb who has given himself up as a willing sacrifice.<sup>5</sup>

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1. The main points are brought out in the following studies: James Robertson-Cameron, "The Lamb of God," Expos., 7th Series, IX (1910), 173-87; Charles, Revelation, I, cxliif., 140f.; J. Jeremias, KThWNT, I, 344f.; E. Lohmeyer, Das Offenbarung des Johannes ("Handbuch zum Neuen Testament"; Tübingen: J.C.R. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1926), pp. 51f.
  2. See also 5.9, 12; 13.8 where this idea of the Lamb's having been slain recurs.
  3. See Werner Foerster, " $\kappa\acute{\epsilon}\rho\alpha\varsigma$ ," KThWNT, III, 670.
  4. See Charles, Revelation, I, 141f.
  5. Revelation, I, cxiv.



It seems probable that behind the sacrificial aspect of the term stand the images of the paschal lamb and the servant of God of II Isaiah.<sup>1</sup> If this is true, then Christ's sacrificial death for sins is inter alia, envisaged by the use of the term Lamb. His once-for-all act of emancipation from sins and the power of sin is what makes the Lamb worthy to open the scroll of God (and begin the end of Satan's reign). And it is this deliverance which gives occasion for the elders to sing of a new exodus event (5.9f.).

Two other passages speak of the victory of the martyrs both through their own death and through the forgiveness effected by the death of Christ and his victory over the demonic forces.<sup>2</sup>

These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

7.14b

And they have conquered him [the accuser] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.

12.11

### Repentance

There are a number of references to repentance in the apocalypse. All assume that God will forgive if the call to repent is heeded. The believers among the seven churches in Asia

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1. There is a possible reference to Is. 53.7: *ὡς πρόβατον ἐπὶ σφαγῇν ἦλθεν καὶ ὡς ἀμνὸς ἐναντίον τοῦ κείροντος αὐτὸν ἀφωσ*  
So Barrett, *NTS*, I (1954/55), 217f.; Martin Kiddle, *The Revelation of St. John* ("The Moffatt New Testament Commentaries"; New York: Harper & Bros., 1940), p. 98; Taylor, *The Atonement . . .*, p. 36.

2. See Taylor, *The Atonement . . .*, p. 40.

Minor are urged to repent.<sup>1</sup> The Seer calls for them to return to the true faith, to obedience and good works. If there is no response then in each case there is the threat of a punishing judgment. They have received initial forgiveness at Calvary (1.5), but they must keep the true faith and do good works to avoid subsequent judgment. Other calls to repent are directed toward the Roman persecutors of the church. The trumpet woes seen in the vision are considered exhortations for repentance (9.20f.) and so are the bowls of God's wrath (16.9, 11). Presumably, if they had repented of their persecution the woes would cease, but, like Pharaoh before the first exodus (Ex. 7-11), they refused to repent. There is no narrow outlook here; God's judgments and forgiving mercy are extended both to the church and to her enemies.

### Second Death

When writing of the ultimate judgment of God, the apocalypticist refers to the "second death" (2.11; 20.6,14; 21.8). To the Rabbis this idea was familiar; it meant exclusion from the resurrection and assignment to eternal damnation.<sup>2</sup> The apocalypticist describes it as a lake of fire (20.14). To avoid this punishment meant an obedience to Christ that persisted even to martyrdom.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Rev. 2.5,16,21f.; 3.3,19.

2. So Strack-Bill., III, 830.

3. See Rev. 2.10f.; 12.11b; 14.4; 21.8.

Closely allied with this is the necessity of having one's name in the "book of life."<sup>1</sup> Though the names had been written in the book before the foundation of the world (13.8; 17.8), those enrolled are listed only on condition (3.2-5). They must be continually exhorted to obedience and faithfulness (13.10b).<sup>2</sup> It is, thus, no accident that those with the Lamb, when he conquers the Roman menace, are described as "called and chosen and faithful" (17.14).

#### Summary

1. God forgives sins. This he does through the work of Jesus Christ.
2. The death of Christ served to bring about freedom from sins for all believers.
3. This forgiveness may be retained eternally only by "those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus" (14.12) even unto a martyr's death, if necessary.
4. Forgiveness is but a part of the salvation which God gives.

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1. See Rev. 3.5; 13.8; 17.8; 20.12,15; 21.27.

2. On this merger of the ideas of predestination and free will see Gottlob Schrenk, "Βίβλος, Κ.Τ.λ.," KThWNT, I, 619.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE TESTIMONY CONCERNING DIVINE FORGIVENESS IN JAMES, I PETER AND OTHER NEW TESTAMENT EPISTLES

#### The Letter of James

The brief homily which tradition has entitled "The Letter of James" contributes but little to the study of forgiveness. The writer has not endeavored to proclaim the kerygma. Rather he is almost completely taken-up with the necessary task of ethical exhortation.<sup>1</sup> The few passages which are relevant to this study serve to underline some points which have already been made.

In line with Lev. 19.15 the author charges his readers to avoid the sin of being partial (especially, to the rich to the neglect of the poor) and to love their neighbors as themselves

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1. J. H. Ropes, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle of St. James (New York: Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1916), p. 4, points out that there are about 60 imperatives in the 108 verses. For a recent discussion of interpretations of this letter see B. S. Easton, "James," Inter. Bible, XII, 3-15. Hans Windisch, Die Katholischen Briefe (3d Auflage; Tuebingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1930), pp. 3f., well summarizes contemporary critical opinion about the purpose, sources and author: "Jac ist kein Brief, sondern Paraenese, Lehre (Λογισμός) mit brieflicher Aufschrift . . . wie alle urchristliche Paraenese stammt der Stoff zum grossen Teil aus juedischer Weisheit (Prov Sir Tob Test. Patr. Henoch, Pirke Aboth usw.) und juedisch hellenistischer Diasporaparaenese (Sap Ps. - Aristaeus Philo usw.) mit einem Zuschuss von



(2.1-13). Failure to show much mercy will mean failure to receive it from God.

For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy; yet mercy triumphs over judgment.

2.13

This is a familiar warning.<sup>1</sup> When, however, James states that mercy triumphs over judgment (κατακαυχάται ἔλεος κρίσεως), he suggests that kindness and mercy to others will prevent condemnation. This is an unusual note in the New Testament; it is one of the many pieces of evidence pointing toward the Jewish background of this work.

The same thought (as that in 2.13) is positively stated at the end of the book:

. . . whoever brings back a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

5.20

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synoptischer Jesusueberlieferung und griechischer Diatribe. Der Autor ist ein Sammler von schriftlich und mündlich ueberlieferter Paraenese . . . Auffallend ist, wie wenig er die Paraenese christianisiert hat . . . Der Verfasser hat . . . eine paraenetische Didache zusammengestellt und sie, um ihrer Verbreitung in den christlichen Gemeinden sicher zu sein, unter die Autorität des Herrenbruders gestellt . . . .

1. For parallels in the Old Testament, Later Judaism and the teaching of Jesus, see Ropes, St. James, p. 201; Windisch, Die Katholischen . . . , p. 16.

The thought of this verse and its companion in I Pet. 4.8 may stem from a number of Jewish sayings which assert the benefits<sup>1</sup> accruing to those who enable others to repent of their sins. If so, the meaning is simply that the merciful act of bringing back an erring sinner both saves the sinner and effects for the one who helped him the forgiveness (καλύψει)<sup>2</sup> of many sins. It is probable that the Christian editor of James does not mean to imply that sins are entirely expiated by kind deeds. Yet in his zeal for ethical instruction his words give room for this interpretation.

Two other verses which emphasize repentance seem at first glance to give evidence of the author's man-centered point of view.

Draw near to God and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you men of double mind . . . (10) Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will exalt you.

4.8,10

The call to "Draw near to God" is a classic Old Testament exhortation which is deeply imbedded in the whole of Jewish literature.<sup>3</sup> It is no denial of divine initiative in forgiveness to employ it in a paraenesis for Christian readers. Likewise, the words "Humble yourselves . . ."<sup>4</sup> are thoroughly Jewish in background

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1. See Lev. 19.17; Prov. 10.12; 24.24f.; Pirke Aboth, 5.26.
  2. The LXX use of this verb allows the meaning, forgiveness. See Ropes, St. James, p. 315.
  3. See Zech. 1.3 and the many citations given by Ropes, St. James, p. 269.
  4. Paralleled in Matt. 23.12; I Pet. 5.6.

but are quite appropriate in a Christian exhortation. No doubt, the author is urging upon his readers a penitent and humble response to the prevenient grace of God.

The final reference to forgiveness comes in an exhortation to any one who is sick. He is to request the elders of the church to come to him. When they have come, they are to pray over the sick one and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord;

and the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. (16) Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man has great power in its effects.

5.15f.

In contemporary Judaism there was nothing unusual about prayer over the sick and this use of oil<sup>1</sup> nor about the close connection between healing and forgiveness of sins. The author assumes that it is God who does the forgiving and healing;<sup>2</sup> his emphasis is upon the human effort necessary to make it effective. He points out the importance of visits, confessions, prayers, etc. within the Christian community. He is urging them to have active concern for the physical and spiritual welfare of each other. They do not have inherent authority to forgive, but the prayers of the righteous are very effective.

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1. Cf. Mk. 6.13; Strack-Bill., IV, 573f., 576.

2. The subject of the passive verbs, *ἀφεθίσεται* and *ἰαθήτε* is undoubtedly God.

## Summary:

1. God forgives sins.
2. Mercy shown to others will put away many of one's own sins from the sight of God.
3. Failure of Christians to be forgiving will mean forfeiture of God's mercy.
4. Christians must be concerned about the sins of others within the Christian community and must take steps leading to the effecting of or bringing the realization of divine forgiveness to one another.

First Peter

In I Peter one hears the proclamation of the redemptive deeds commonly heard in the preaching of the early church.<sup>1</sup> One also detects the presence of the eschatological tension between the "now" and the "not yet" which is so familiar in most of the other New Testament writings.<sup>2</sup> These things are not surprising, for, if the cogent reasoning of E. G. Selwyn<sup>3</sup> be accepted, this epistle is the product of the joint effort of the apostle Peter and Silvanus (5.12).<sup>4</sup> It is addressed to Christians in Asia

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1. For a detailed examination of this see E. G. Selwyn, The First Epistle of St. Peter (London: Macmillan Co., 1952), pp. 73ff.; A. M. Hunter, "I Peter," Inter. Bible, XII, 81ff.
  2. So Bultmann, Theology . . ., II, 181; E. G. Selwyn, "Eschatology in I Peter," The Background of the New Testament and Its Eschatology, ed. W. D. Davies and D. Daube (Cambridge: University Press, 1956), pp. 394-401.
  3. St. Peter, pp. 9-17, 27-36. For a statement and critique of the claim by Perdelwitz and others that I Peter 1.3-4.11 is a second century sermon (much influenced by the mystery religions) to a company of newly baptized people, see Selwyn, St. Peter, pp. 305-11.
  4. The latter was the trusted envoy of the Jerusalem church, Acts 15.27, and companion of Paul. He collaborated in some



Minor and was probably sent about 63 A. D. at a time when these people were experiencing sporadic, social persecution. The letter contains a number of implied references to divine forgiveness.

### "Sprinkled with His Blood"

The first occurs in the brief salutation:

Peter . . . To the exiles . . . (2) chosen and destined by God the Father and sanctified by the Spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood:  
May grace and peace be multiplied to you.

1.1f.

In the phrase  $\acute{\epsilon}\nu \lambda\gamma\iota\sigma\mu\acute{\omega} \pi\nu\epsilon\acute{\upsilon}\mu\alpha\tau\omicron\varsigma$  Spirit is, doubtless, a subjective genitive;<sup>1</sup> thus the reference is probably to Christian baptism.<sup>2</sup> The Spirit sanctifies the recipient for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling ( $\rho\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\iota\sigma\mu\acute{\omicron}\nu$ ) with his blood. In the background of this there possibly lies the blood-sprinkling ceremony at the ratification of the old covenant (Ex. 24.3-8). The ancient ceremony, apparently, had no reference to the forgiveness of sins, but for the early Christians, as has been observed, the new covenant, which was inaugurated by the death of Jesus, certainly contained this idea.<sup>3</sup> The probable reference to baptism

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of Paul's letters, e.g., I & II Thess. See Windisch, Die Katholischen . . . , p. 80.

1. So Windisch, Die Katholischen . . . , p. 52.
2. So Bultmann, Theology . . . , II, 181; Hunter, Inter. Bible, XII, 90.
3. For other passages which connect the sprinkling of the blood of Christ with forgiveness of sins see Heb. 10.22; 12.24.

further suggests that forgiveness is in mind here. The situation then suggests that the purpose of God's election of the Christian readers was "that they might be obedient to Christ and might be forgiven by his sacrifice."<sup>1</sup>

### A Costly Deliverance

Throughout I Peter, as R. Bultmann has written, the "indicative furnishes the basis for the imperative."<sup>2</sup> This is well illustrated in the hortatory section which calls for holy living (1.13-2.3). In the midst of it appear the words:

You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your fathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, (19) but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.

1.18f.

It is notable that the verses 18-21, along with 2.21-25 and 3.18-22 (to be noted later), are possibly taken from earlier hymns about Christ.<sup>3</sup> If so, they give evidence of commonly cherished affirmations in the church at a time previous to the date of this letter. The emphasis in the two verses above is upon the costly (τιμίῳ αἵματι) redemption (ἐλυτρώθητε) from the bondage of pagan ways. The mention of the unspotted lamb is probably a

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1. Hunter, Inter. Bible, XII, 90.

2. Theology . . . , II, 181.

3. So Windisch, Die Katholischen . . . , pp. 65, 70; Bultmann, Theology . . . , II, pp. 153, 156.

reference to the paschal lamb;<sup>1</sup> if so, the whole hymn (1.18-21) celebrates the new spiritual exodus. In it the forgiveness of sins is only implied. It is the cost of the deliverance that is underlined, and Peter uses this as a powerful motivation for holy living.

### The Death of Jesus and Isaiah 53

There is a reference to God's forgiveness in another hortatory section. After urging servants to be submissive to their masters (2.18ff.), Peter gives them encouragement by using another declaration, possibly based on an early Christian hymn (2.21-25). It has been called the "imitatio Christi."

For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. (22) He committed no sin; no guile was found on his lips. (23) When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; . . . (24) He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.

2.21-24

The striking thing about the passage is the clear and repeated echo of Is. 53.<sup>2</sup> Verse 24 is the central point for this study, and its beginning phrase (ὅς τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν αὐτὸς ἀνέχεσθαι) corresponds closely with the LXX in Is. 53.4,12.<sup>3</sup> Jesus, who

1. So Windisch, Die Katholischen . . ., p. 57; Selwyn, St. Peter, p. 146.
2. So Bultmann, Theology . . ., I, 31. Cf. LXX: Is. 53.4,5,6,7, 9,11,12. Hunter, Inter. Bible, XII, 118, has a convenient chart showing the similarities.
3. Is. 53.4: οὗτος τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν φέρει (LXX); 53.12: καὶ οὗτος ἁμαρτίας πολλῶν ἀνέχεσθαι (LXX).

committed no sin, patiently bore our sins in his body unto death. There is no detailed explanation of how this was accomplished, but there are several hints. There is, first, the repeated suggestion that it involved a vicarious suffering (2.19-21, 24). Secondly, in the term *ξύλον* there is a probable echo of Deut. 21.22f. If so, Jesus' suffering and death involved bearing the blame or the curse for sins, as in Gal. 3.13. The purpose (*ἵνα*) of this act is that *ταῖς ἁμαρτίαις ἀπογεγνόμενοι τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ ζήσωμεν*<sup>1</sup>. His death means that in some sense we have died with reference to sin and have become alive with reference to righteousness.<sup>1</sup> This comprehensive act of "healing" presumably, includes the forgiveness of sins, in the sense of the cancelling of guilt, but it goes beyond it in the idea of death to sin and life in righteousness.

It should not be overlooked that Jesus' act of forgiving and healing love was to be an example for the believers to follow (2.21). For the author(s) there is, apparently, no separation of the Gospel and its requirements of men.

#### Access to God and Forgiveness

The last passage of importance for this study appears in 3.18-22. In verses previous to these the apostle encouraged

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1. This recalls Rom. 6, but no dependence upon Paul is provable. See Windisch, Die Katholischen . . . , p. 66.



the churches to be gentle, reverent and long suffering in the face of persecution (3.13-17). He supports his exhortation with the following words:

For it is better to suffer for doing right, if that should be God's will, than for doing wrong. (18) For Christ also died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit; . . . (21) Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a clear conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, (22) who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God . . . .

3.17f., 21f.

Here, as in 2.21-25, there are the references to the vicarious death of Christ (δικαίος ὑπὲρ ἀδίκων, 3.18) and to its expiating effect on sins (περὶ ἁμαρτιῶν).<sup>1</sup> The purpose is stated simply: "that he might bring (προσαγάγῃ) us to God." Such access to God through Christ is a recurrent theme in the New Testament,<sup>2</sup> and it is probable that it includes the forgiveness of sins. The later mention of baptism (3.21) supports this conclusion.

In the context baptism is closely associated with the death (3.18), resurrection and ascension of Christ (3.21f.). The apostle emphasizes that it saves not by a physical cleansing (οὐ σαρκὸς ἀπόθεςις ῥύπου) but by a spiritual one. It

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1. *Ibid.*, pp. 70f.

2. See Rom. 5.2; Eph. 2.18; 3.12; Heb. 6.18-20; 7.25; 10. 19-22.

involves a petition<sup>1</sup> to God for a clean conscience. Such a prayer as Heinrich Greeven<sup>2</sup> points out, would be for the forgiveness of sins.

### Other References

There are other implicit references to forgiveness which need only be mentioned. In 1.22 there is a possible suggestion that forgiveness comes through obedience to the truth of the Gospel and love of the brethren. In 4.8 there is an echo of an old proverb (Prov. 10.12); unfailing love for others does away with (καλύπτει) many of one's own sins and those of others as well.<sup>3</sup> Evidently, for Peter, as well as James (5.20), this was still true in the Christian era.

### Summary

1. God has forgiven sins through Jesus Christ.
2. This mercy is both exhibited and made effective in his patient suffering, death, resurrection and exaltation.
3. The grateful recipients of this forgiving mercy are to follow Christ's example, bearing in forgiveness the sins of others. Such love blots out many of one's own sins.
4. Forgiveness is but an implied part of Peter's message of redemption and salvation. In the same contexts with forgiveness are found such themes as sanctification, new covenant, gift of the Holy Spirit, being dead to sin and alive to righteousness, and being brought to the presence of God.

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1. So Windisch, Die Katholischen . . . , p. 73; Heinrich Greeven, "ἑρωτάω, κ.τ.λ.", KThWNT, II, 686. But see Selwyn, St. Peter, p. 205, who interprets ἑπερωτήματα as a "pledge" from a clear conscience.

2. KThWNT, II, 686.

3. So Hunter, Inter. Bible, XII, 138.

The Other New Testament Epistles

The Pastoral Epistles, I and II Timothy and Titus, have been traditionally ascribed to Paul. It is, however, more probable that they are from a student of his theology, who had become an ecclesiastical leader of high station and who wrote at a date well within the second century.<sup>1</sup> This, of course, does not preclude the possibility of there being incorporated into these letters certain fragments of older Pauline letters. There is no specific mention of divine forgiveness in these epistles, yet the idea lies implicit in numerous passages.

The idea that God may continue his forgiving mercy is included in the prayerful salutations and endings of the letters where *χάρις*, *ἔλεος* and *εἰρήνη* are so frequently used.<sup>2</sup> The idea of God's forgiveness through Christ comes even closer to the surface in a passage where it is said that Christ called Paul into his service in spite of his sinfulness (I Tim. 1.12-17). The animosity and impudence of Paul prior to his appointment is so emphasized that the bestowal of mercy to him is used as an illustration of the "sure saying" that:

Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

I Tim. 1.15b.

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1. See the excellent and recent survey of critical opinion by F. D. Gealy, "The First and Second Epistles to Timothy and the Epistle to Titus," Inter. Bible, XI, 343-75.

2. I Tim. 1.2; 6.21b; II Tim. 1.2b; 4.22b; Tit. 1.4b; 3.15b.

Forgiveness is implicit in other passages where God is said to be the Savior of all<sup>1</sup> or to desire that all men might be saved<sup>2</sup> or where Christ is said to have given himself for the redemption of all.<sup>3</sup> It is also implicit in several other soteriological affirmations. Through Christ comes grace, life and immortality<sup>4</sup> and also the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit.<sup>5</sup>

Finally, it is notable that such forgiveness is expected to issue in zeal for good works.<sup>6</sup> Paul's prayer for the forgiveness of these Christians who had deserted him while he was on trial<sup>7</sup> is an example of the required sharing of forgiveness by those who live under grace.

With regard to the rest of the Catholic Epistles, II Peter and Jude, it is very probable that the proper apostolic age has been long past. There is wide agreement among the scholars that these letters belong to the middle of the second century.

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1. I Tim. 4.10; Tit. 2.11; 3.4f.

2. I Tim. 2.4.

3. I Tim. 2.6 (ἀντίλυτρον); Tit. 2.14 (λυτρώσεται).

4. II Tim. 1.9f.; 2.11.

5. Tit. 3.5.

6. Tit. 2.14.

7. II Tim. 4.16.



II Peter is concerned primarily with combatting per-versions of the Christian faith. He affirms his faith in the forgiving mercy of God in Christ--once in a general way (1.3f.) and once more directly (1.9).<sup>1</sup> In keeping with his concern for orthodoxy, he warns about the seriousness of post-baptismal apostasy (2.20-22); it would be better, he says, never to have been a Christian in the first place.<sup>2</sup> Finally, the author's reason for the delay of the parousia is notable. It is delayed by God's forbearance; he desires that all might repent and be forgiven before it comes (3.9).

Jude, probably appeared a little before II Peter. It, too, is primarily concerned with maintaining orthodoxy and right behavior in the church. Beside the general prayer for "mercy, peace, and love" in the salutation (vs. 2), the only reference to God's forgiveness is that implied in the ascription with which the letter closes:

Now to him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you without blemish before the presence of his glory with rejoicing . . . .

vs. 24.

#### Summary

1. God forgives sins through the grace which has come to men in Jesus Christ.
2. This forgiving grace has involved his ransoming death.

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1. τοῦ καθαρισμοῦ τῶν πάλαι αὐτοῦ ἁμαρτιῶν

2. Cf. Heb. 6.4-8; 10.23, 26-31.

3. The recipients of God's forgiveness are called upon to be zealous for good works which include forgiveness to one's debtors.
4. Apostasy from Christ after baptism is a serious offense, but it is not said definitely whether or not it is a mortal sin.

## CONCLUSIONS

### Sin and the Aspect with which Forgiveness Deals

Both the Old Testament and the New bear witness to the deeds of God in man's behalf and of God's requirements of him. They make it plain that man is to live in obedience and loving fellowship with God. Sin is repeatedly portrayed as being man's rejection of God's love and man's rebellion against his commands. It is a rejection of God's offer of community both at Sinai and in Jesus Christ. There are various results of this sin. Among them are the accrued guilt (the being in the wrong before God) and the separation between man and God which guilt causes. There are other results, but they may be passed over here, for it is with the guilt and the separation that forgiveness deals.

### Forgiveness in the Old Testament Finds Fulfillment in the New Testament

It may be observed that the terms and metaphors for forgiveness appear far more frequently in the Old Testament than in the New. This permits two observations: (1) It is a reminder that in the Old Testament God was considered to be gracious and merciful, even as he is in the New Testament. Indeed, it is the forgiving quality of Yahweh and the expectation of a future eschatological forgiveness which help the New Testament writers to interpret the "Christ-event." (2) There seems to be ample reason for the relative infrequency of the

specific terms in the New Testament. The apostolic writers assumed the graciousness of God, which was familiar to them from their Scriptures (the Old Testament), and concentrated on the proclamation of Jesus and the significance of his person and work. Of course, the theme of forgiveness of sins is involved in the teaching of Jesus, and in his personal relationships with sinners and in the total mission which he is presented as fulfilling. However, a notable point in the New Testament is this fact that whereas one reads relatively little about God's forgiving mercy (as a specific idea), he reads much about Jesus. This suggests that the apostolic church felt that they had received a revelation and witnessed a deed of God which was different from that known to old Israel. The writer to the Hebrews sums up their testimony:

In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; (2) but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son . . . .

(1.1-2a)

The Son, as he is portrayed, specifically taught about God's forgiveness and granted it, yet even more he personified it. Sin and forgiveness need not have been the subject of much explicit discussion, for Jesus dealt with the first by embodying the second. The writers needed only to present him in his historical dealings with men. As it has been well put, the writers considered Jesus to be the "divine Pardon incarnate."



### Definition of Forgiveness

As a consequence of the above, a definition of divine forgiveness in apostolic Christianity would have to have a personal--more specifically--a Christological perspective. One may say, first, that forgiveness is God's (a) release or effacing of the sinner's guilt, (b) his foregoing of or remission of all just resentment because of man's rebellious rejection of his love, or (c) the removal of the barriers which sin raises to block communion between God and men. Second, this subjective attitude of God toward sinners has been made incarnate. The apostles understood God's forgiveness to be the gift of Jesus, himself. Here was assurance in flesh and blood of the will of God toward sinners; here, too, was the true example of human forgiveness--man to man. Ultimately, the apostles would not explain Christ by "forgiveness"; rather they would explain "forgiveness" by pointing to Christ.

The two sacraments illustrate this personalized definition of forgiveness. They do, indeed, symbolize the abstract truth that God forgives sins, but the pictures they present are of his gracious deeds. The giving of the body and blood of Christ is signified in the Lord's Supper. The granting of the Holy Spirit, the living presence of Christ, is signified by baptism. To the early church such deeds clearly implied forgiveness.

### God's Judgment and Mercy Belong Together

The whole study has pointed out the inseparableness of God's judgment and forgiveness. This was asserted in perhaps the earliest strand of the Old Testament. It is also evident in the New Testament. The New, no less than the Old, takes seriously God's just wrath upon sin. This is seen in the interpretation of the cross of Jesus. Though the explanation is not always clear, a repeated affirmation is that in the obedient death of Jesus God dealt with sin. That death is persistently interpreted in the light of Isaiah 53; that is, Christ in obedience to God vicariously bore away the judgment of God upon the sins of men. Sin was punished; he took it in man's place or as the representative of men, so that men might be forgiven and placed in the right before God. Thus in the work of Jesus God demonstrates that he is both righteous (sin is punished) and merciful (sinners are forgiven).

### The Gift of Forgiveness is but a Part of the Total Gospel

The early church interpreted the whole event of Christ to be God's answer to man's sin. It is obvious that to the writers of the synoptic gospels and of the epistles that the concept of the "forgiveness of sins" was a helpful verbal key. It unlocked the door to much of the meaning of the event. However, no one idea, like forgiveness, could adequately describe the significance of the whole of it. For them Jesus had a larger task than that of conveying forgiveness. When

one goes to the synoptic gospels to find the teaching on divine forgiveness, <sup>one</sup> he finds it mentioned a number of times, but even more, he is confronted with the person of Jesus, portrayed as the Messiah of Israel, obedient to the redemptive mission of the suffering servant of God. When one turns to the Acts and epistles, he finds the doctrine of forgiveness but, even more, he finds the radical message of the resurrection, the presence of the Holy Spirit, the beginnings of the eschatological age, the gift of "life," "new creation," "righteousness," incorporation into the death and resurrection of Christ, membership in his body, etc. Each of these themes contributes to the whole message, yet each would be inadequate in itself.

#### Both Sin and God's Remedy Take Place Within Present History

The results of sin leave men in a plight that manifests itself in temporal history. The apostolic faith was that "forgiveness" also takes place within history, and, indeed, at the immediate present. In the Old Testament forgiveness was understood to be almost always accompanied by relief from physical distress. Such relief was then considered a sign of or a ratification of the promised forgiveness. This connection raised serious questions which need not be mentioned here. However, it is to be recognized that present, historical assurance was also real in the faith of the early church. Jesus was himself the assurance of God's forgiveness. The gift of his presence

in the Holy Spirit continues that assurance in history and in a way that was no longer limited to his physical presence.

The Gift of Forgiveness is Based on the  
Nature and Deeds of God--not Man

In the Old Testament the appeal for divine forgiveness was based upon or motivated by the nature and deeds of God. The basis of the appeal was God's covenant loyalty, his own name, love, etc. Men were sinners and there was no other basis for mercy beside God's nature. In Later Judaism there was such a growing emphasis on the necessity of repentance that there was a tendency to veer more and more toward making forgiveness dependent upon the moral cleanness of men. Indeed, the quality of their obedience and repentance came to be efficacious in the matter of atonement. But with the advent of Jesus there is a sharp return to the Old Testament emphasis. His forgiveness and love sprung from his own obedience to God and fidelity to his mission--"to seek and to save the lost." He had a "shocking" love and forgiveness for sinners. He was not inhibited by their moral worthlessness. Indeed, his mission took him straight on to total rejection and death in their behalf. No man proved worthy in the situation; even his disciples forsook him and fled. Yet his own love and forgiveness were up to the end extended to all who would receive it. The early church saw in his obedient death (which epitomized his life) both the expression of and the ground of God's for-



givenness to sinners. Here in his death and resurrection was God's eschatological gift of grace to sinners which fulfilled the expectations of the prophets. The gift was not conditioned on the quality of man's obedience or repentance; it was freely bestowed. All boasting and self-righteousness was forever excluded.

### The Appropriation of Forgiveness

Forgiveness was given, yet there were certain responses which were thought to condition one's appropriation of it. The first essential was faith which accepts Jesus Christ as God's offered forgiveness. Second, there was the frequent realistic reminder that self-righteousness was blinding in its effect. Therefore, repentance was an expected concomitant of faith. When one saw in Christ the righteous will of God, his judgment on sin and his costly, persistent love for sinners, it was unthinkable to the New Testament writers that repentance would fail to follow. How could one want and receive forgiveness without sorrow for sin and without turning in discipleship to God in Christ? Third, there was the expectation and exhortation that those forgiven by God would in turn forgive their brethren. This runs like a silver thread through the New Testament. To fail to be forgiving is to set at naught and lose one's own forgiveness. Further, such neglect withholds divine forgiveness from others. Though it is not fully ex-

plained, it is affirmed that the Christian community has the awesome responsibility not only to proclaim but also to put into effect God's forgiveness. If it fails then the world will not know or recognize the forgiveness which God has given to it.

### The Scope of Forgiveness

After the doubts raised during the early days were resolved, the apostolic community put no limits on the geographical or cultural scope of divine forgiveness. Indeed, its universal efficacy is specifically declared in most of the writings and is of recurrent emphasis in some. The wide missionary activity of the apostolic church further demonstrates this conception of the inclusiveness of God's mercy.

The scope of forgiveness also has an eternal dimension in the New Testament. Not only was Jesus Christ considered the incarnation of God's forgiveness and the ground of its bestowal to all, but also his accomplishment had a finality about it. There was no longer need for sacrifices, atonements of any kind, or even for anguished pleading. The forgiveness bestowed through Christ was bestowed once for all--for time and for eternity. Those of the present and of the future who would receive it need only believe in Christ and turn in discipleship to him. And believing disciples may rejoice in the assurance of daily and final forgiveness; they must only forgive even as they have been forgiven.

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